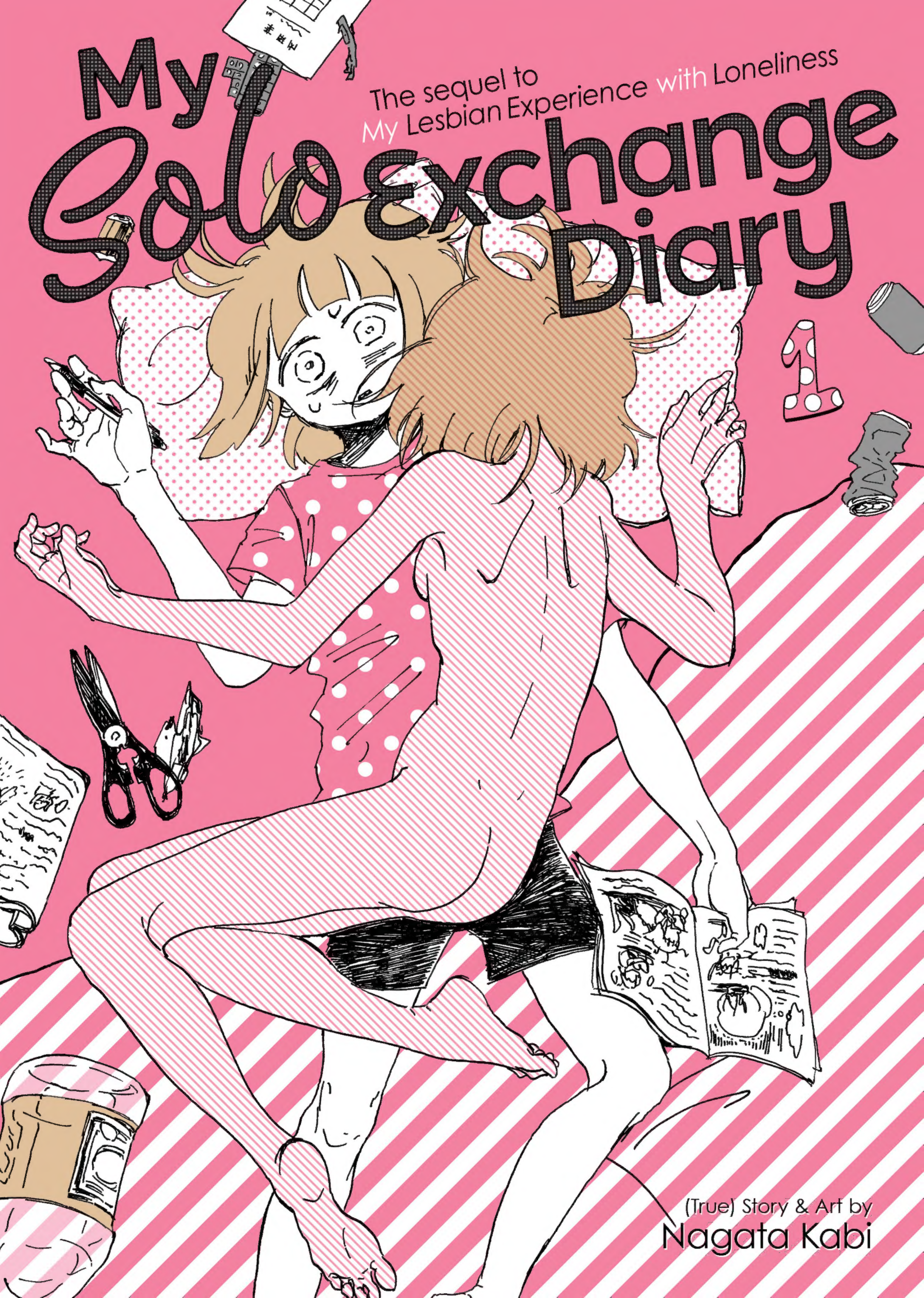


My Gaido Exchange Diary

The sequel to
My Lesbian Experience with Loneliness

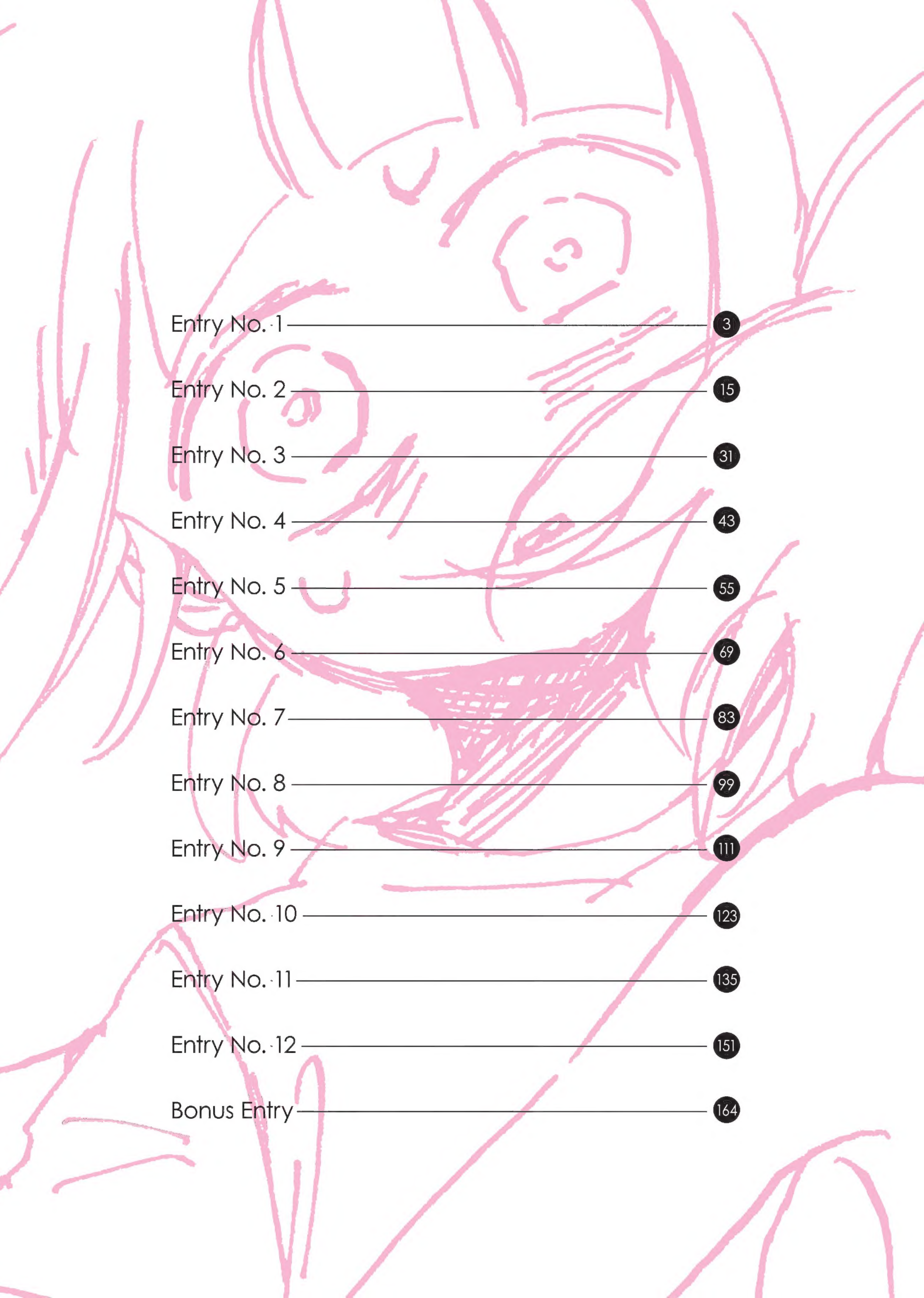
1



(True) Story & Art by
Nagata Kabi

My Solo Exchange Diary 1

(true) story & art
Nagata Kabi



Entry No. 1 — 3

Entry No. 2 — 15

Entry No. 3 — 31

Entry No. 4 — 43

Entry No. 5 — 55

Entry No. 6 — 69

Entry No. 7 — 83

Entry No. 8 — 99

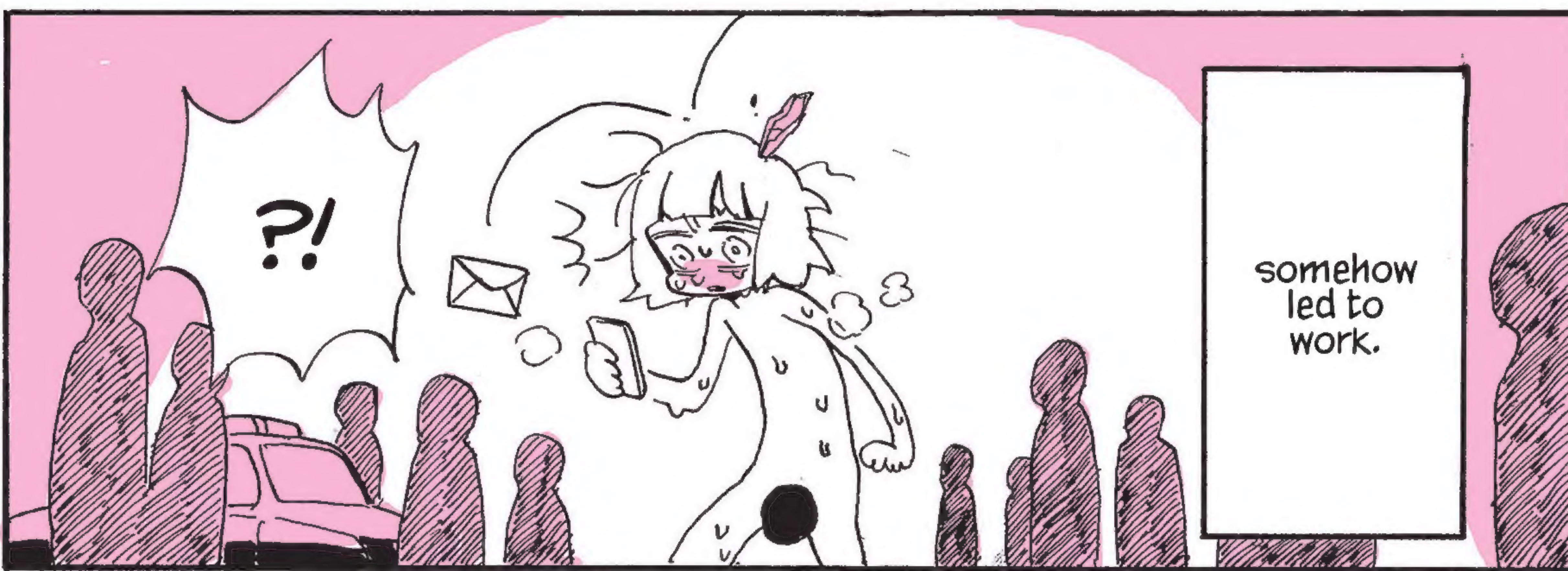
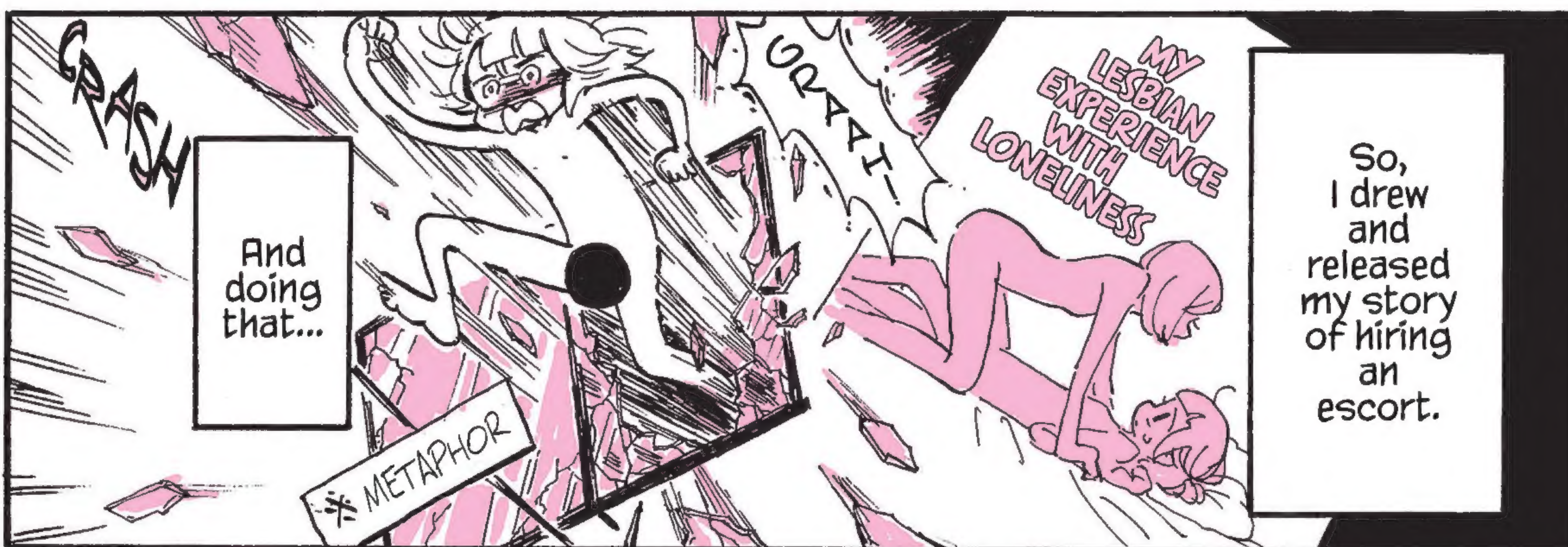
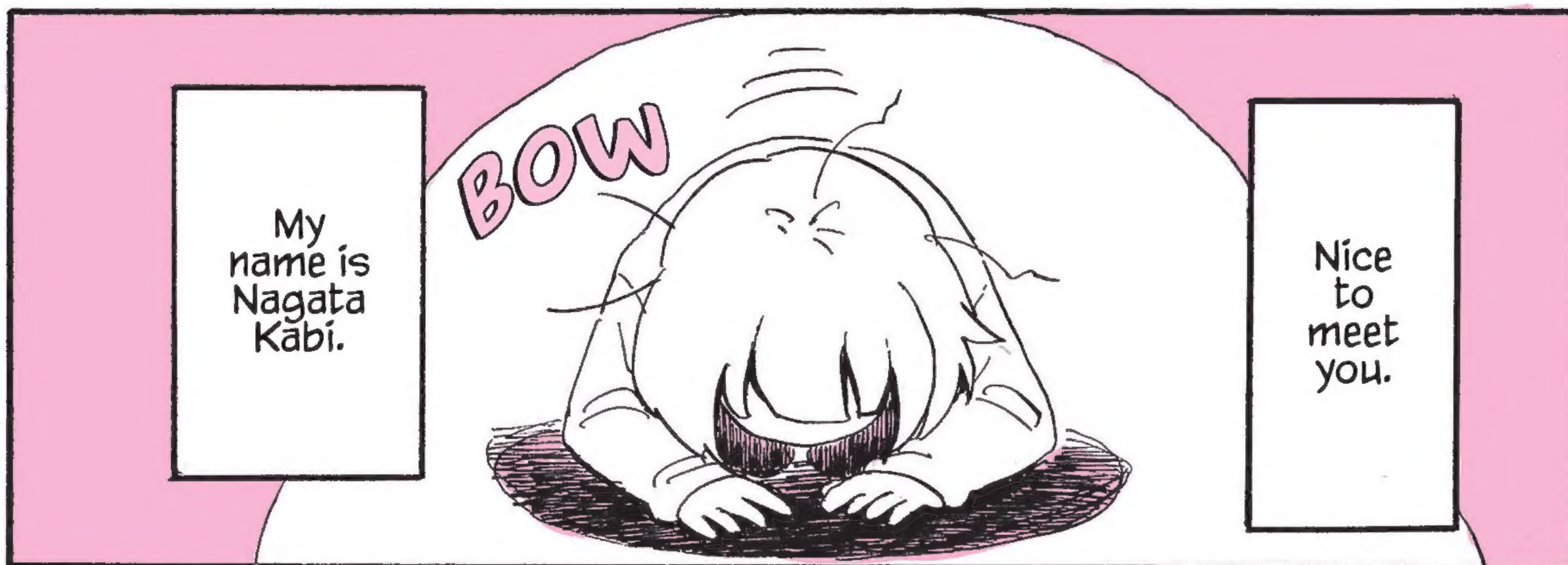
Entry No. 9 — 111

Entry No. 10 — 123

Entry No. 11 — 135

Entry No. 12 — 151

Bonus Entry — 164





A
SERIES!

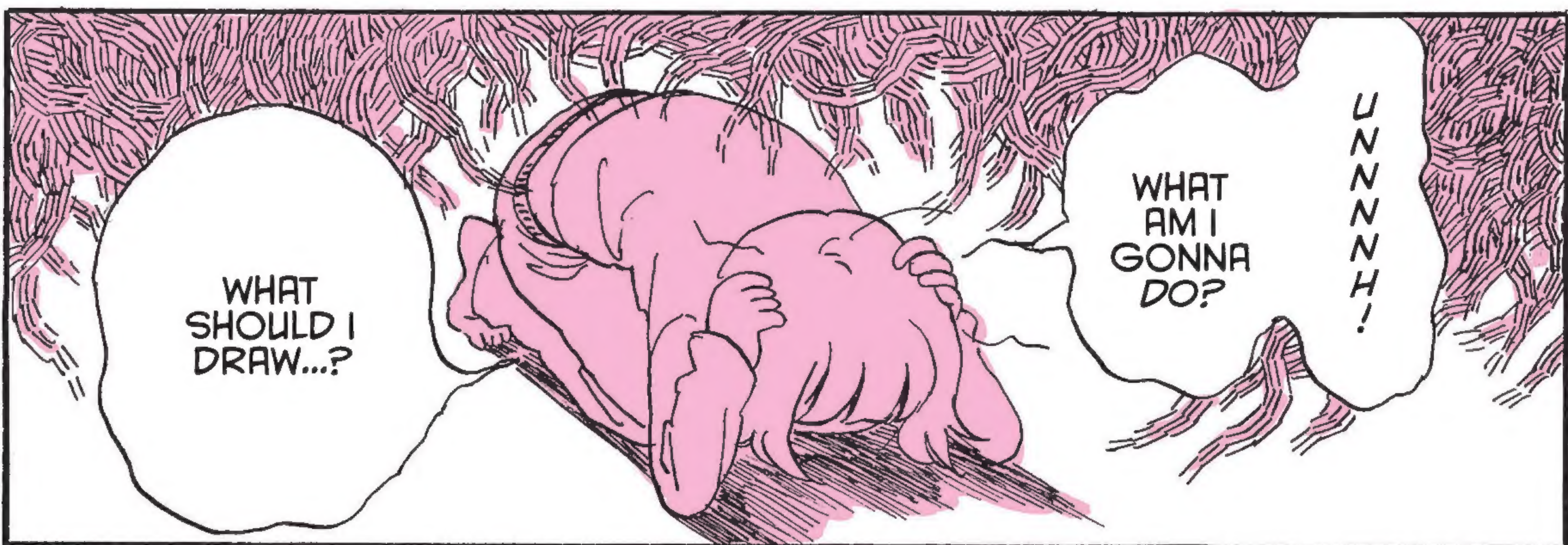
I got
a
series.



I was
going
to draw
myself.

RIGHT.

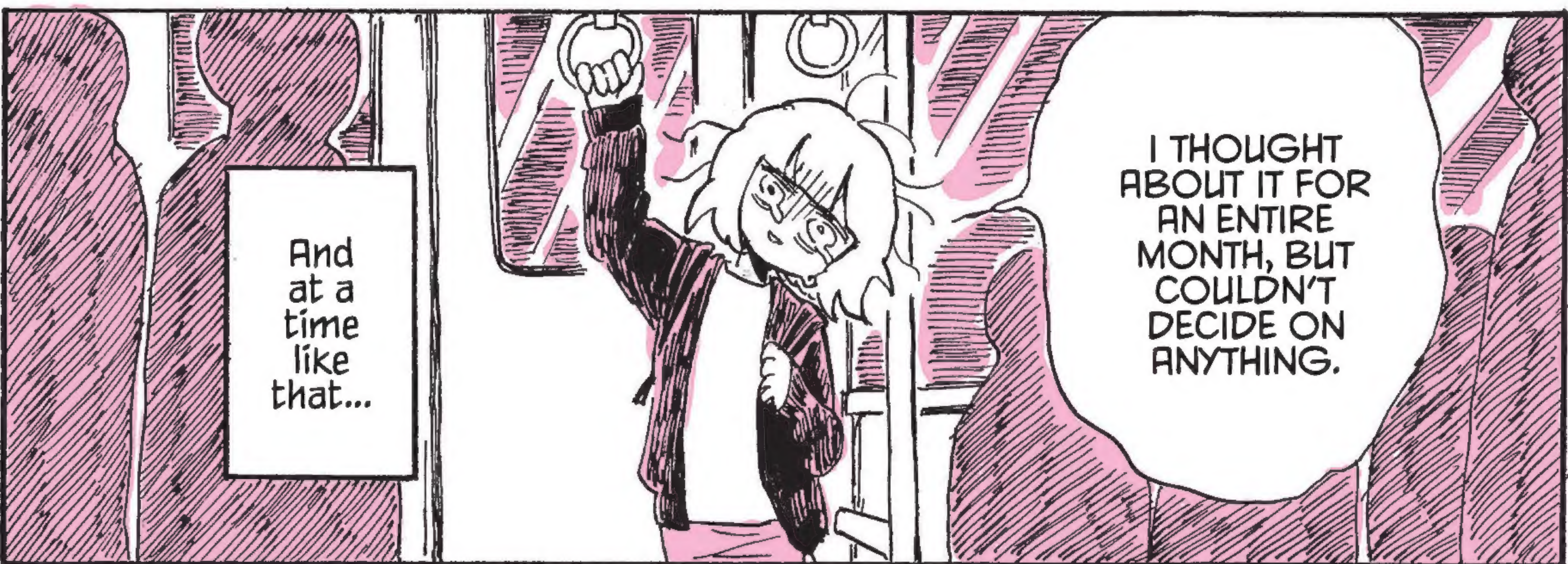
OF
ESSAYS,
ACTUALLY.



WHAT
SHOULD I
DRAW...?

WHAT
AM I
GONNA
DO?

U
N
N
N
H!



And
at a
time
like
that...

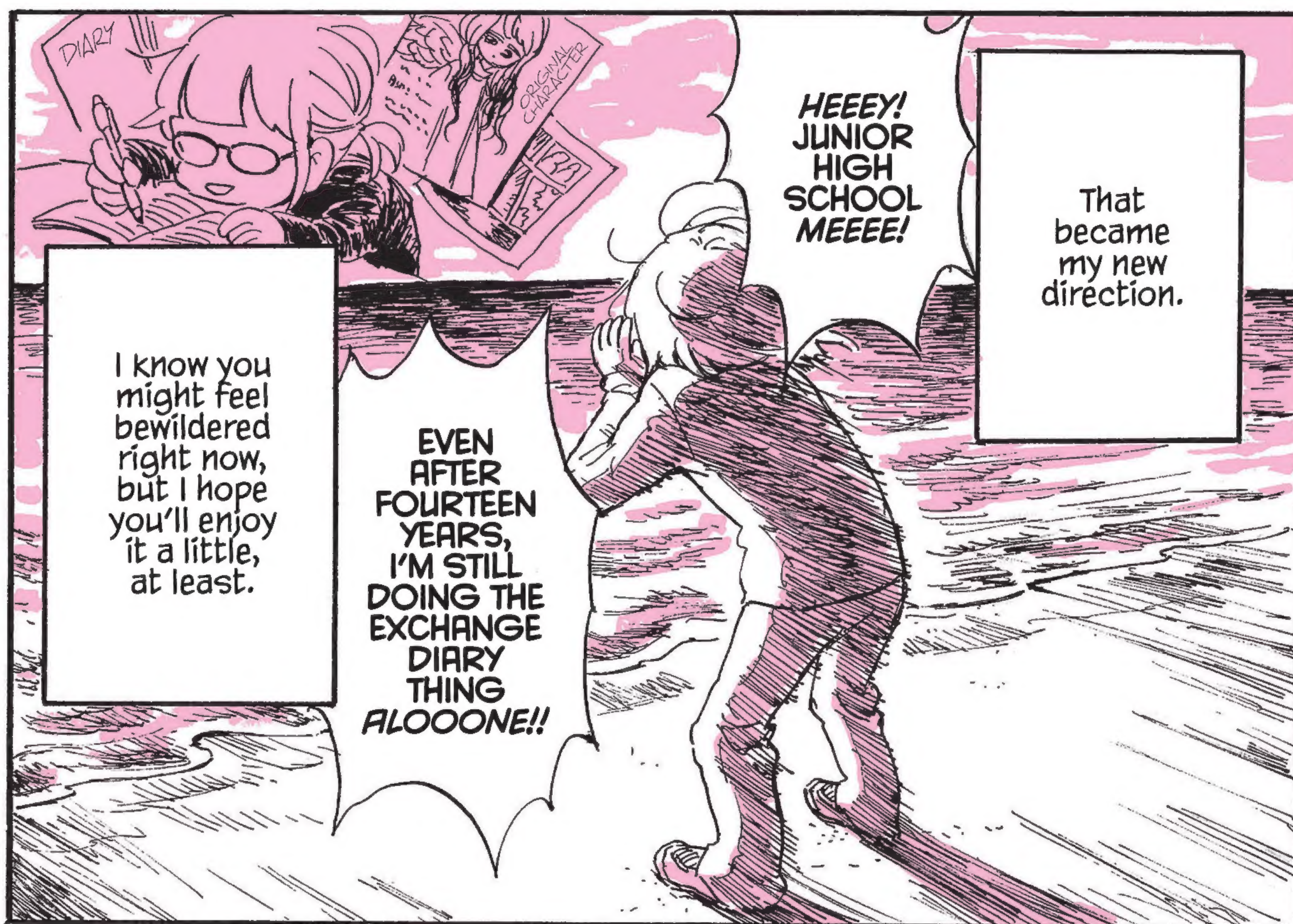
I THOUGHT
ABOUT IT FOR
AN ENTIRE
MONTH, BUT
COULDN'T
DECIDE ON
ANYTHING.



My editor saw me mention, on Twitter, that I did a solo exchange diary back in junior high.

WHAT DID YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAID YOU DID A "SOLO EXCHANGE DIARY"?

I'M CURIOUS.



I know you might feel bewildered right now, but I hope you'll enjoy it a little, at least.

EVEN AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS, I'M STILL DOING THE EXCHANGE DIARY THING ALOOONE!!

HEEEY! JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL MEEEE!

That became my new direction.

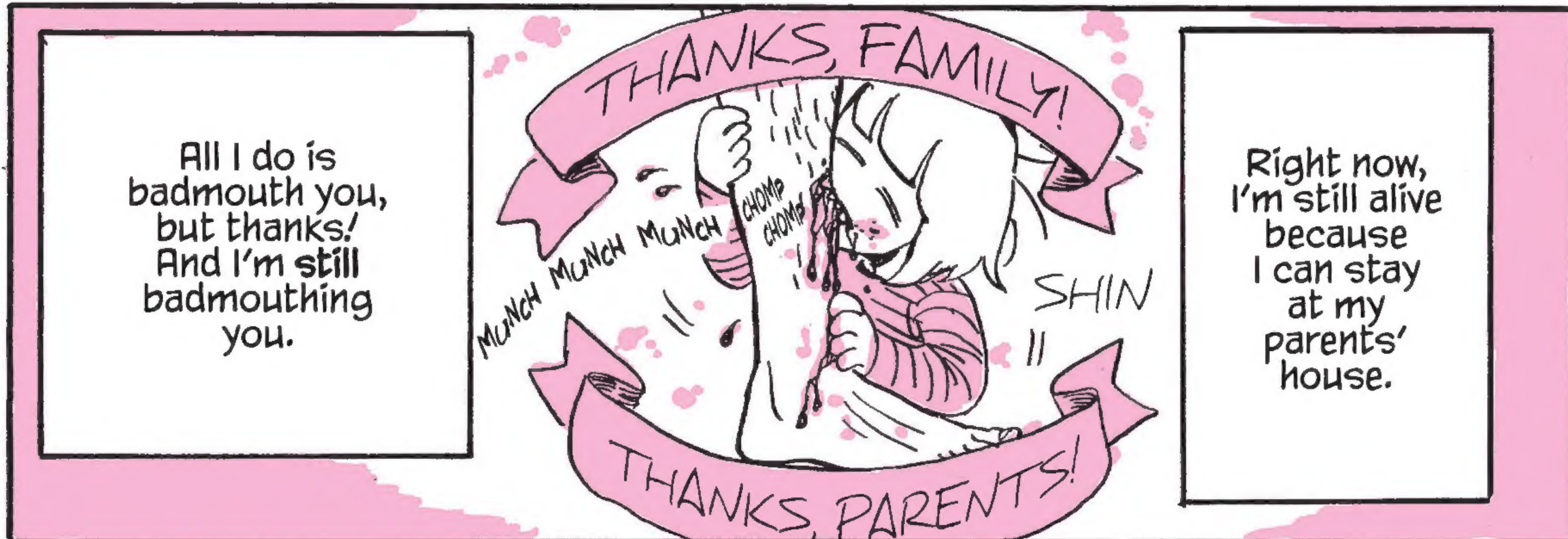


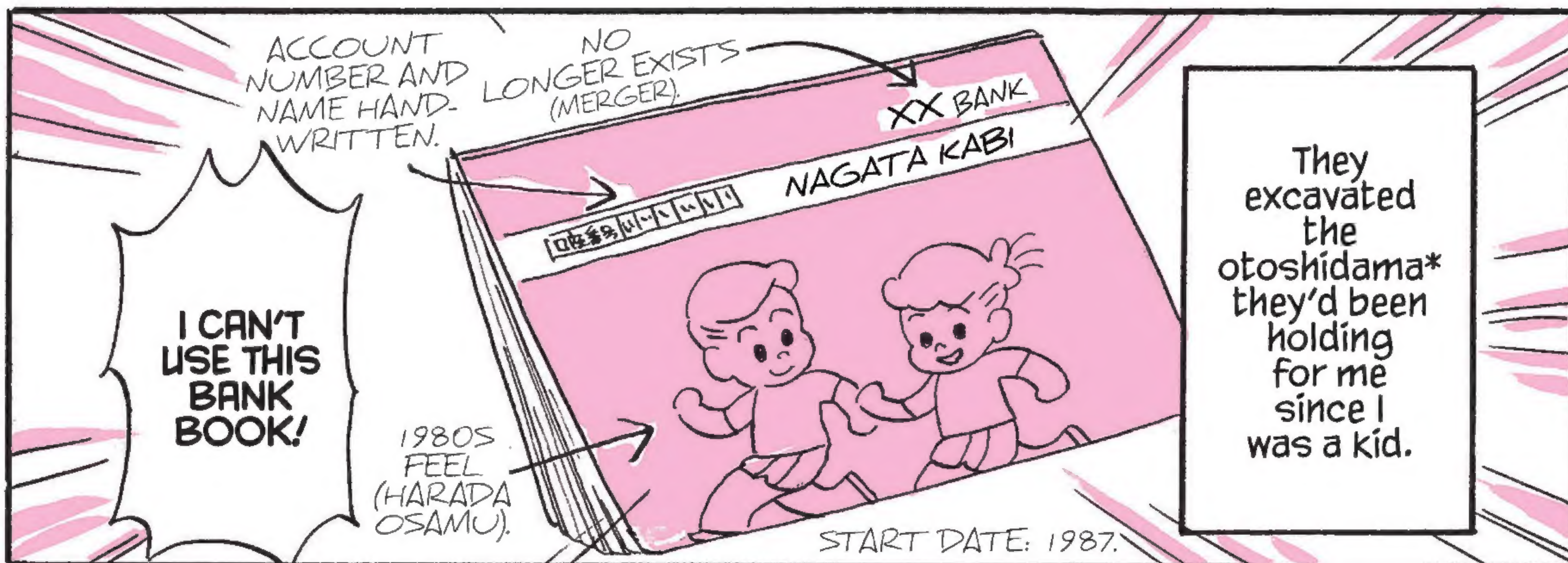
FROM: NAGATA KABI

DEAR NAGATA KABI

It's been a long time since I've done an exchange diary.

How are you?





They excavated the otoshidama* they'd been holding for me since I was a kid.

*Money given to children on New Year's Day.



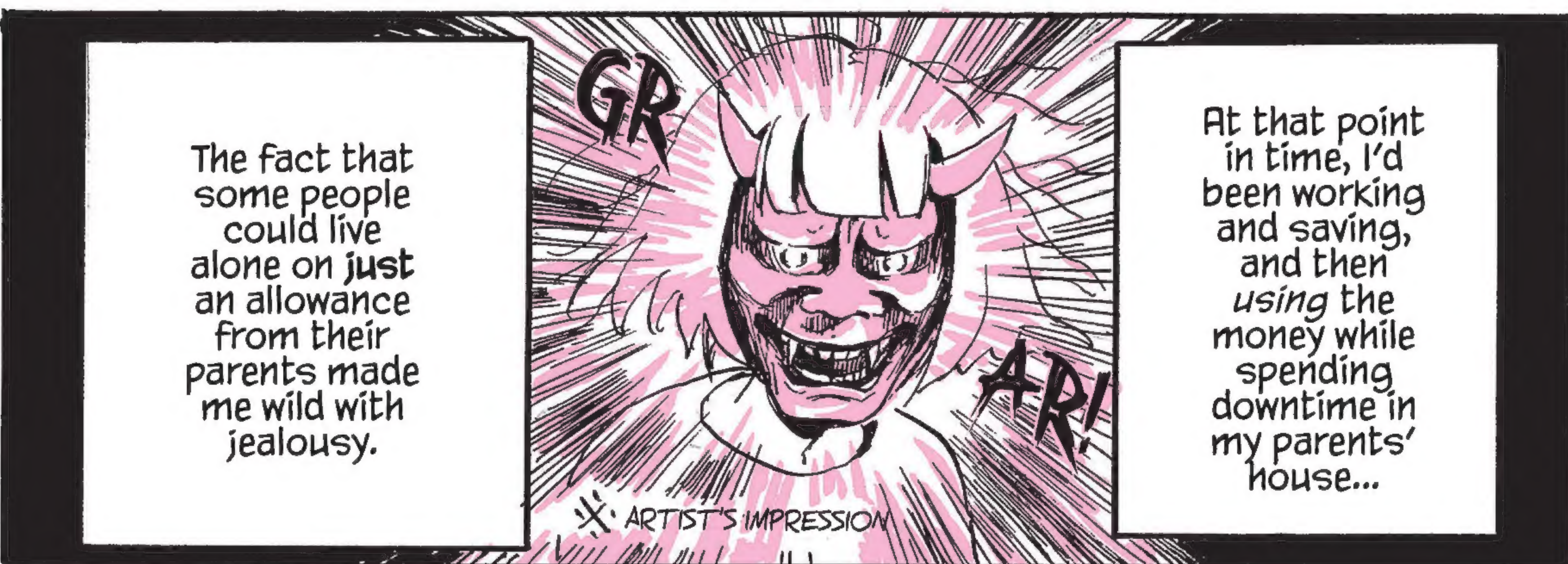
My childhood New Year's cash, combined with money from a bunch of other occasions, had resulted in a nice chunk of change in there.

*About \$10,000 USD.



After all, my NEET* lifestyle had used up the million yen I'd saved from working part-time!

I'M WELL AWARE!

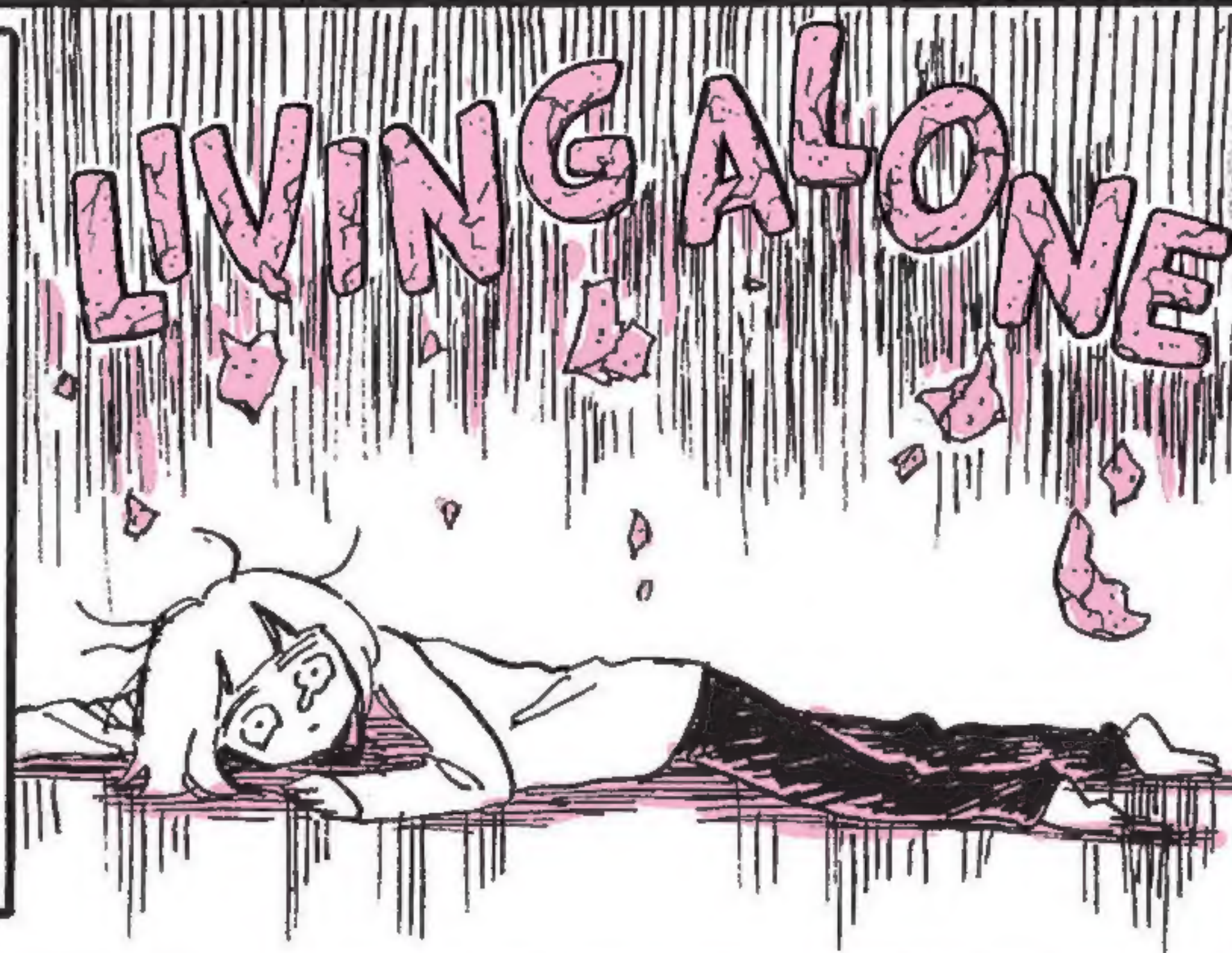


The fact that some people could live alone on just an allowance from their parents made me wild with jealousy.

At that point in time, I'd been working and saving, and then using the money while spending downtime in my parents' house...

✂ ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

When I used up my savings without ever moving out, I was surprised by the lingering effect that had on me.

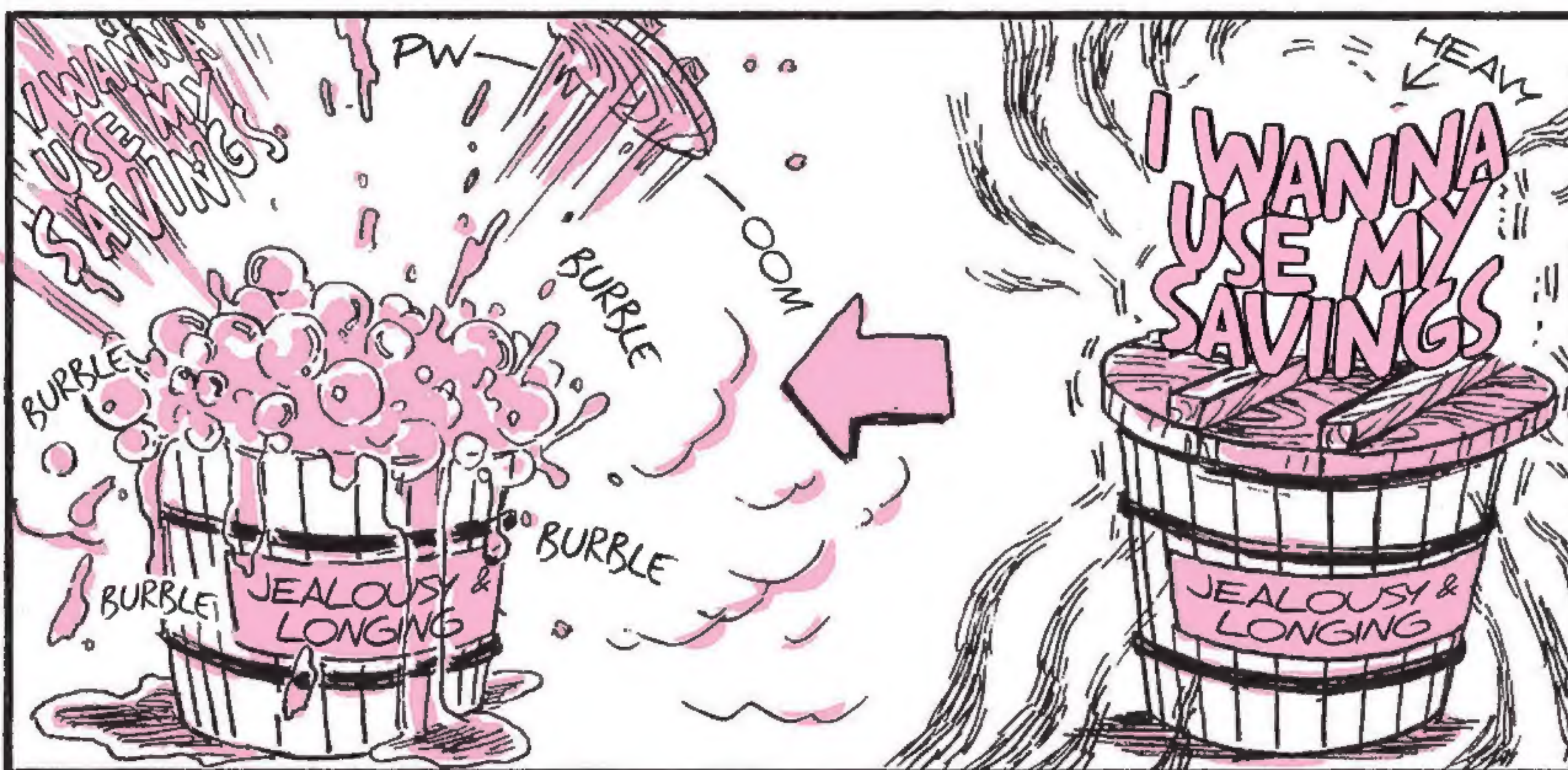


I wanted to live by myself on my savings.

The whole thing eats at me way too much, even now.



All those people who lived alone on an allowance weren't to blame-- but still, I seethed at them.

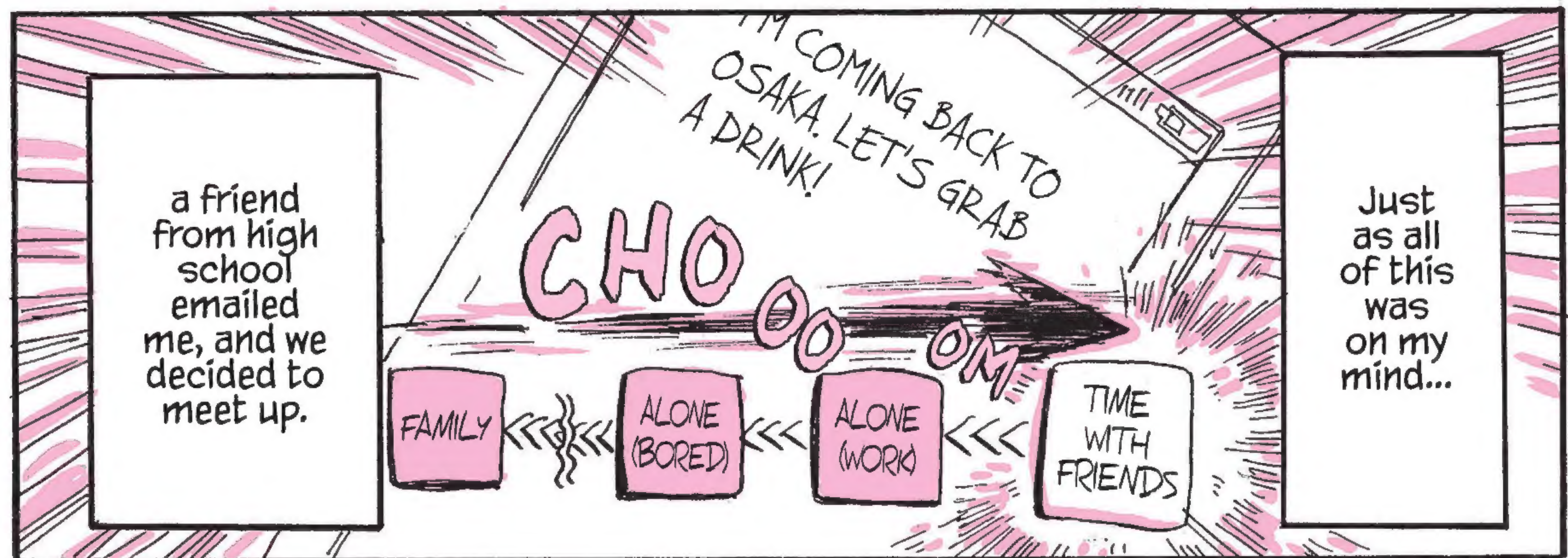
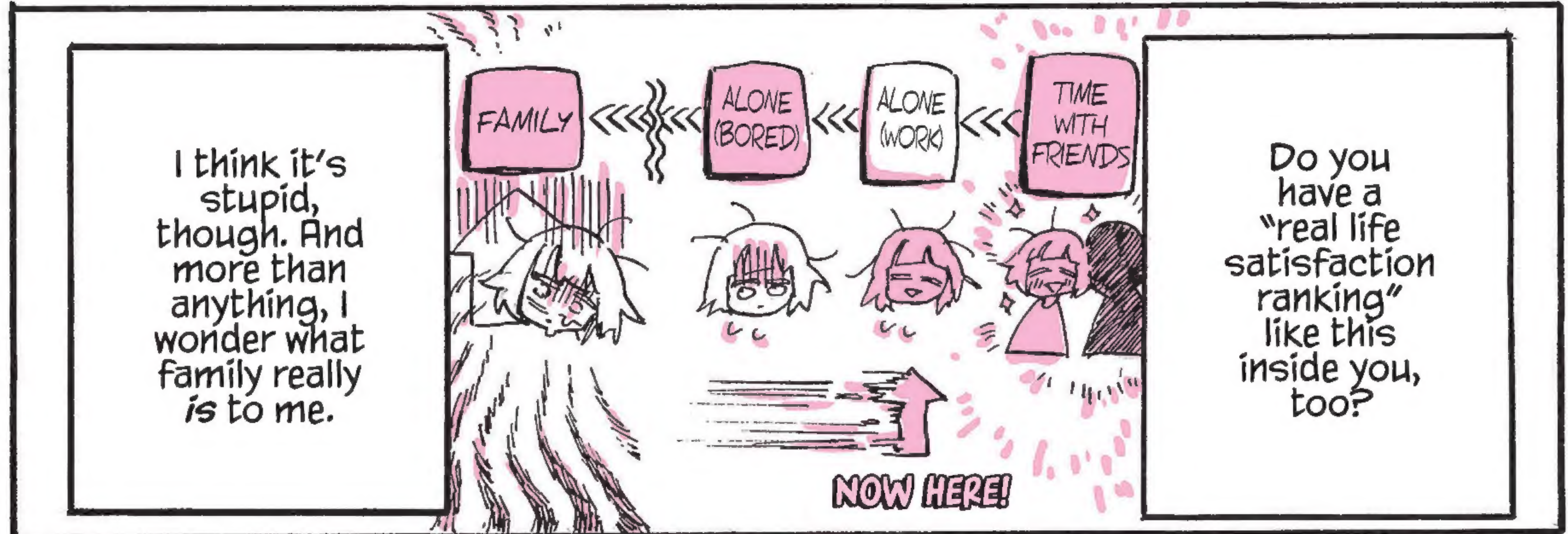
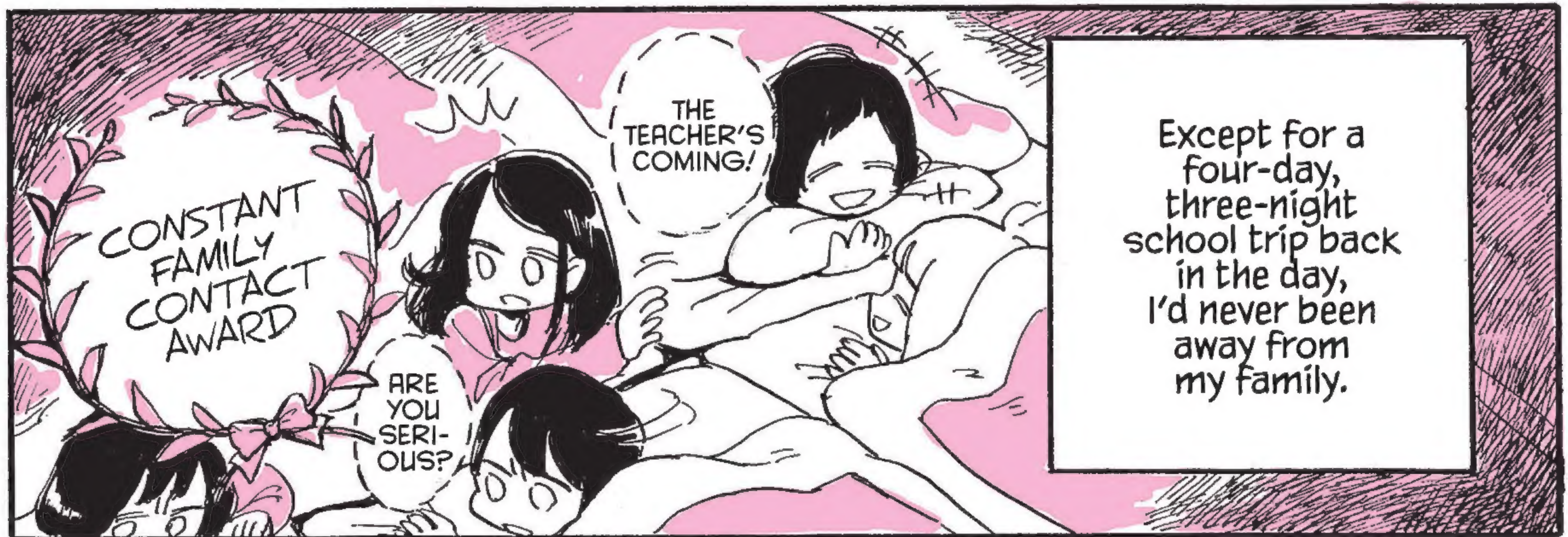


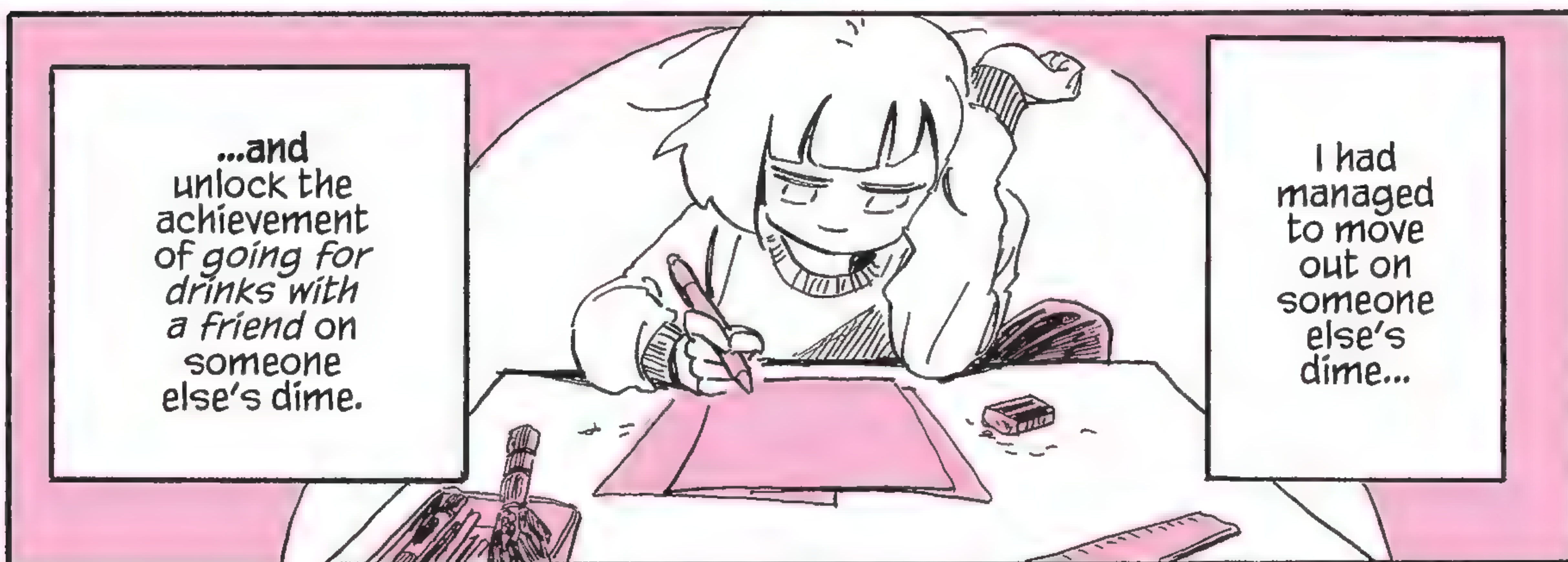
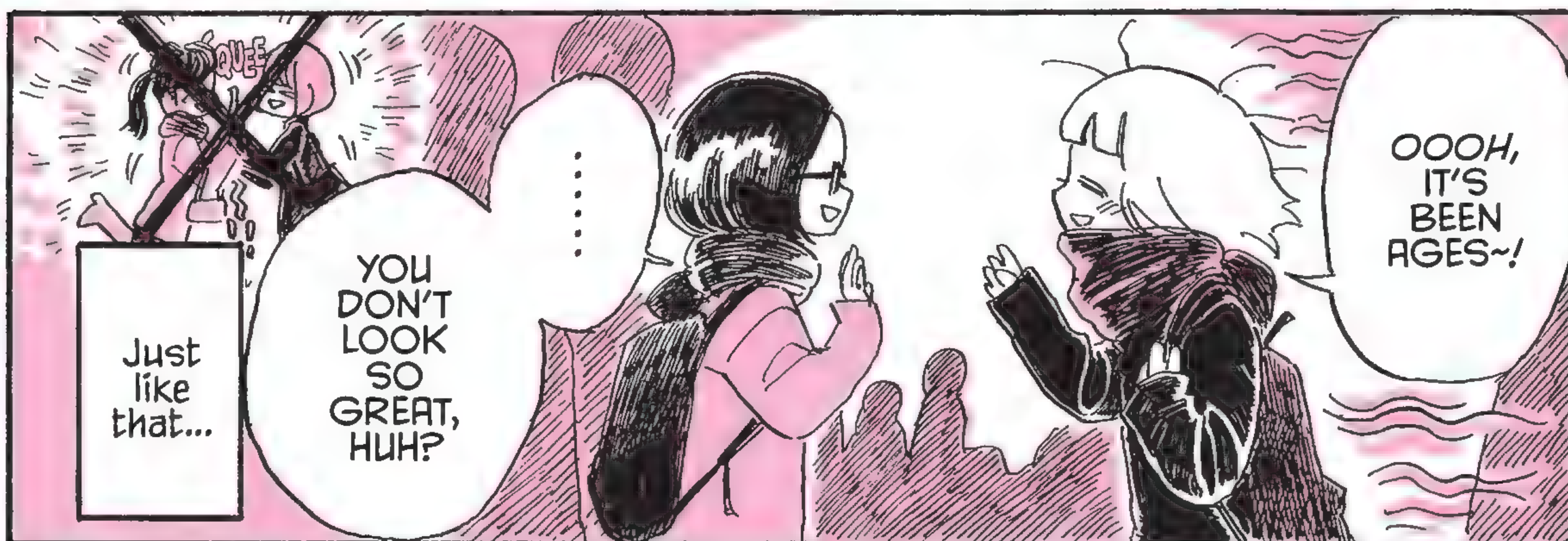
That jealousy and longing had been fermenting for years, and something finally burst.

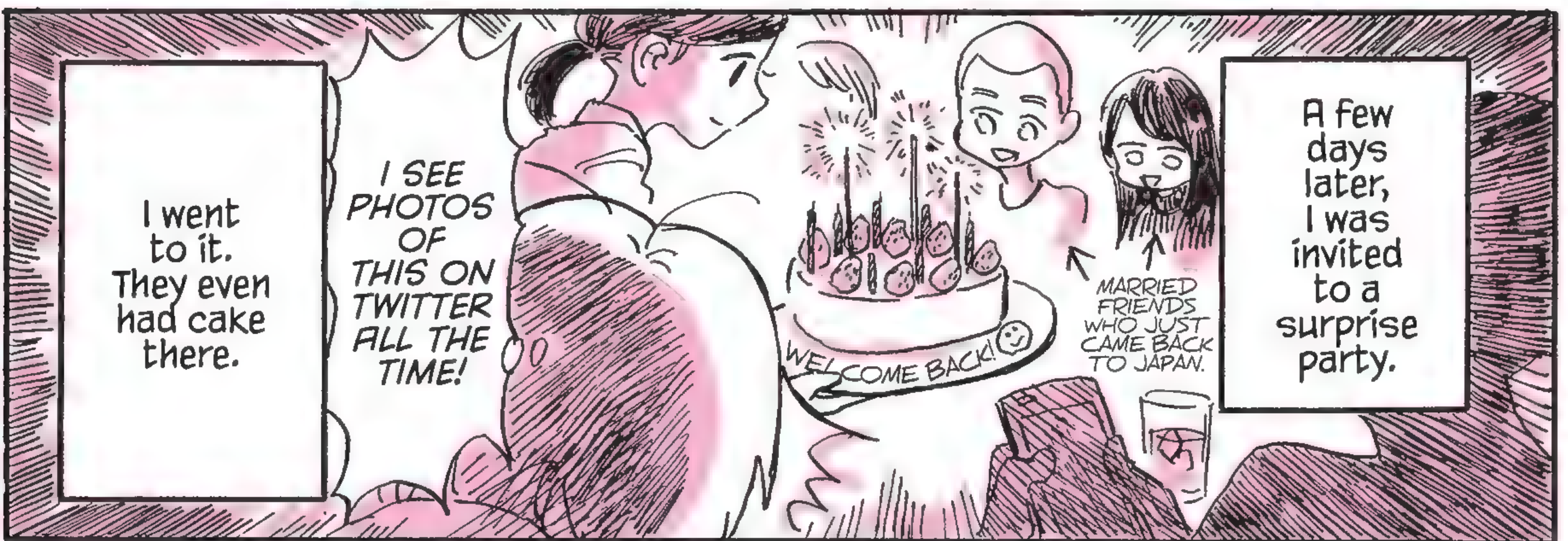
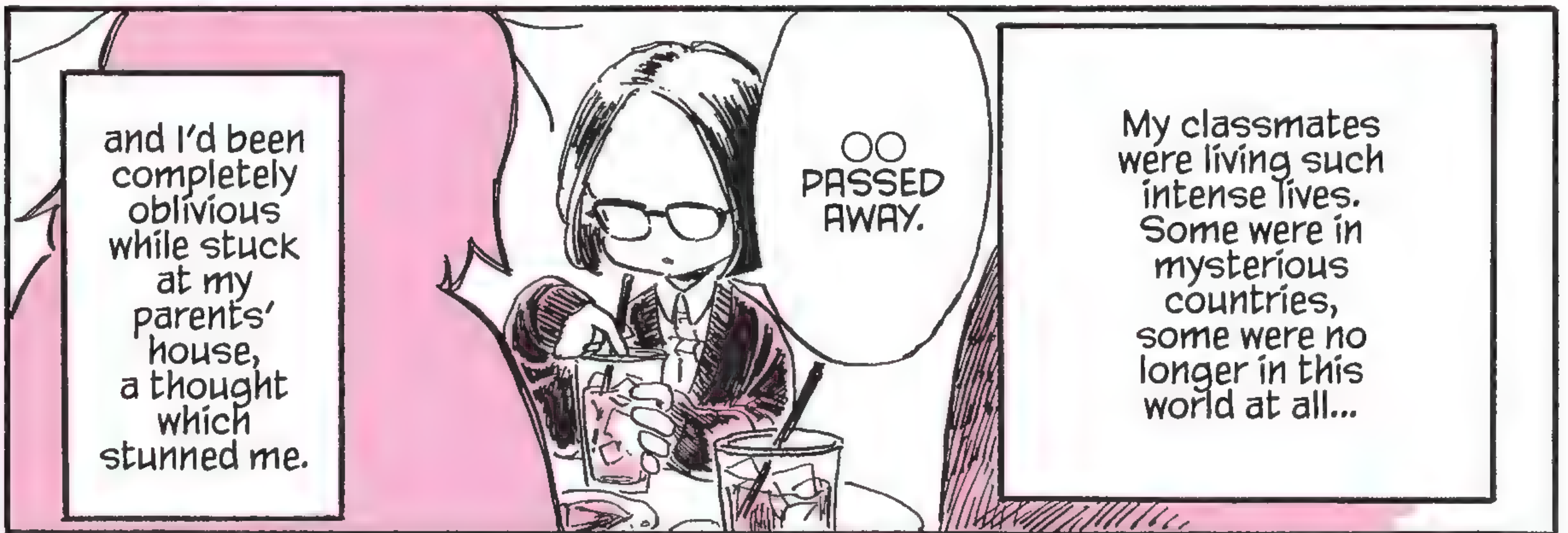
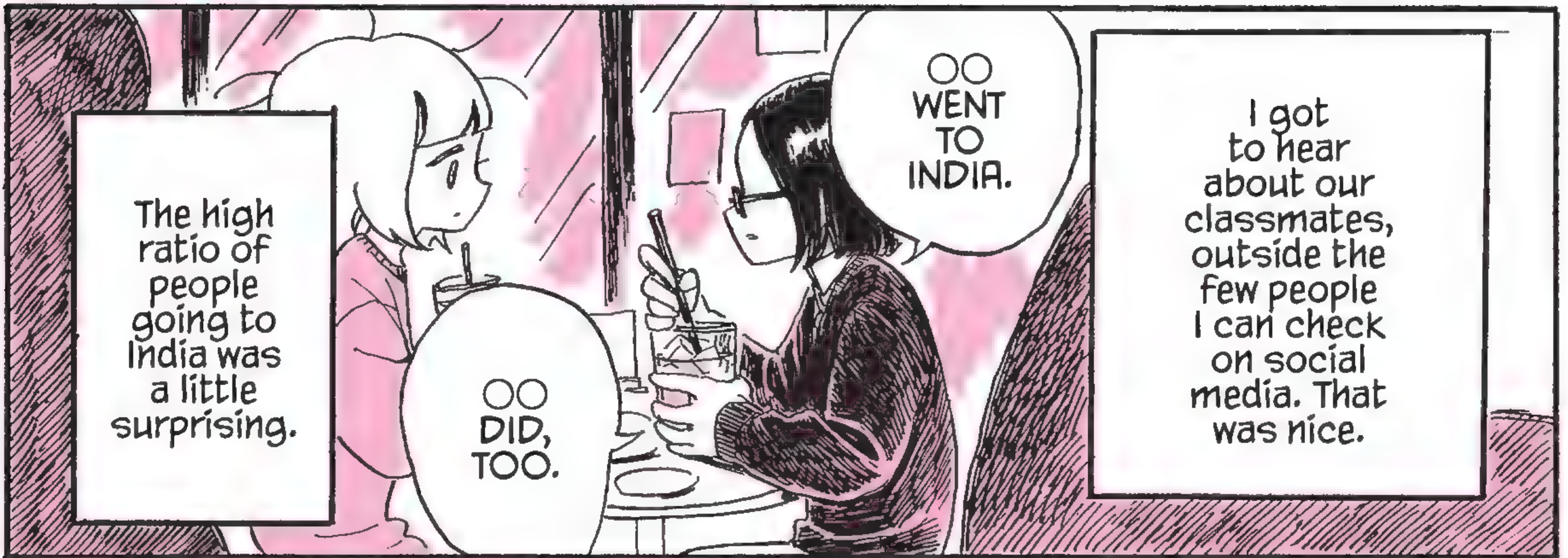
I'M GONNA DO IT!! I'M DOING IT!!

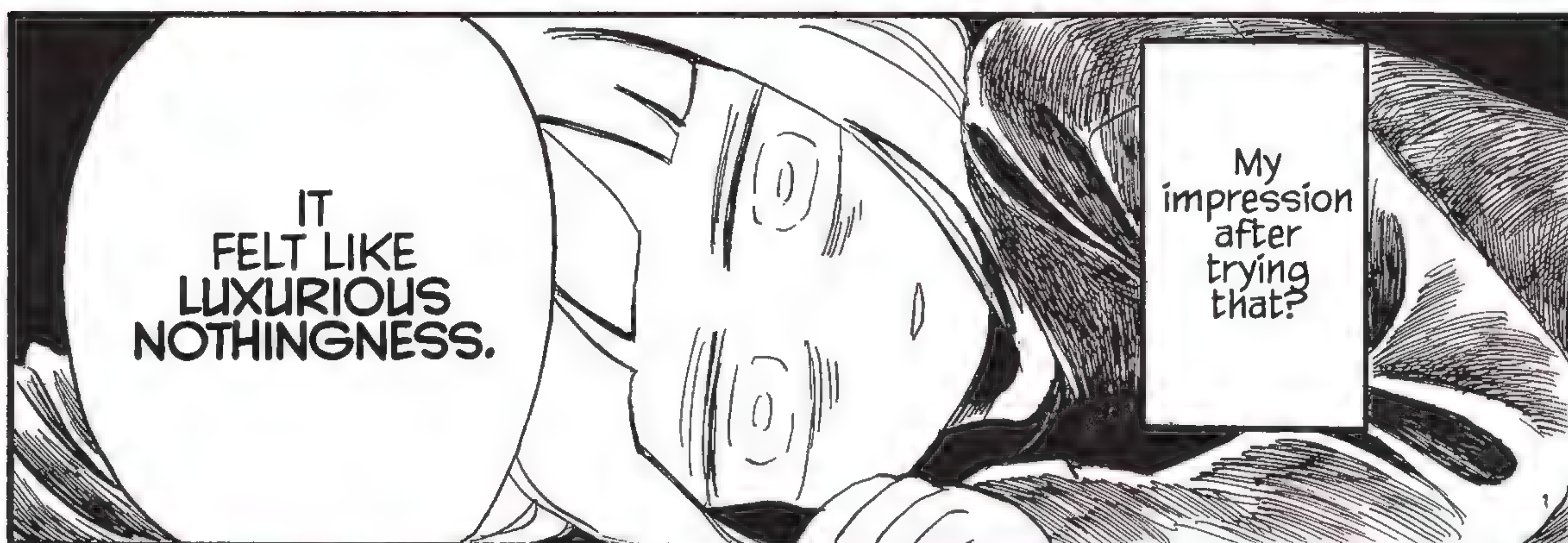
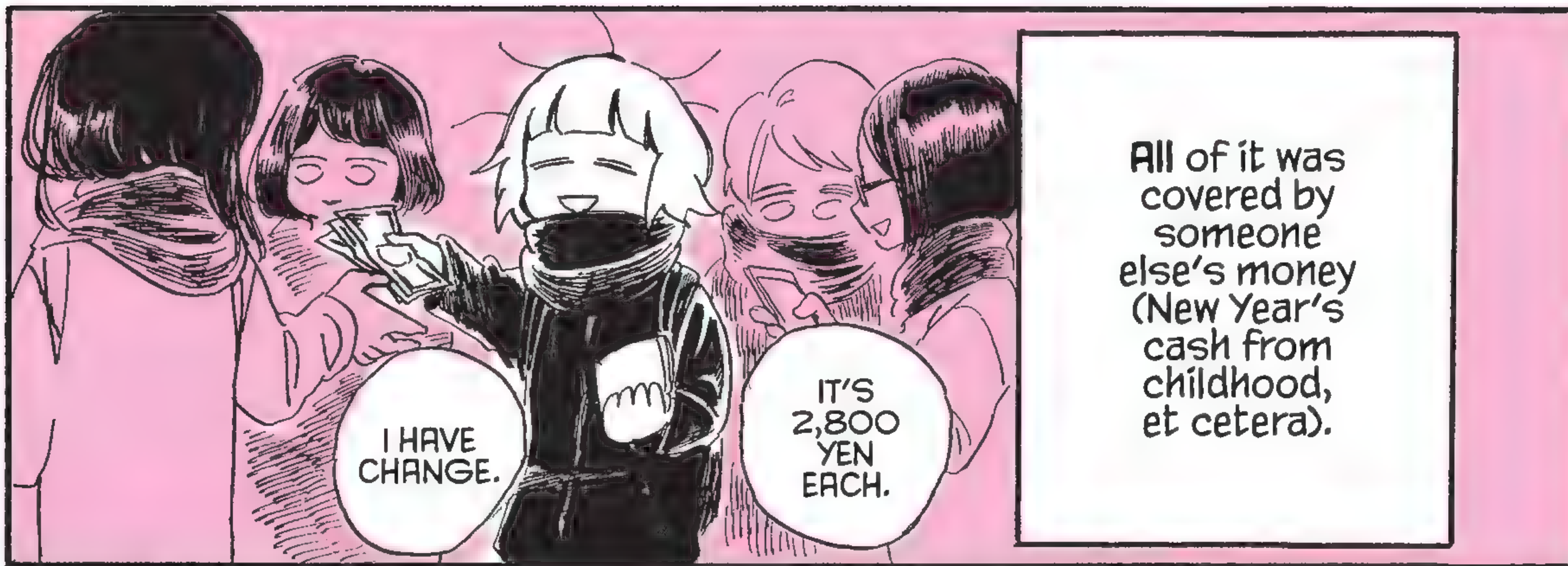


IT'S OKAY TO HAVE FUN WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S MONEY, RIGHT?!

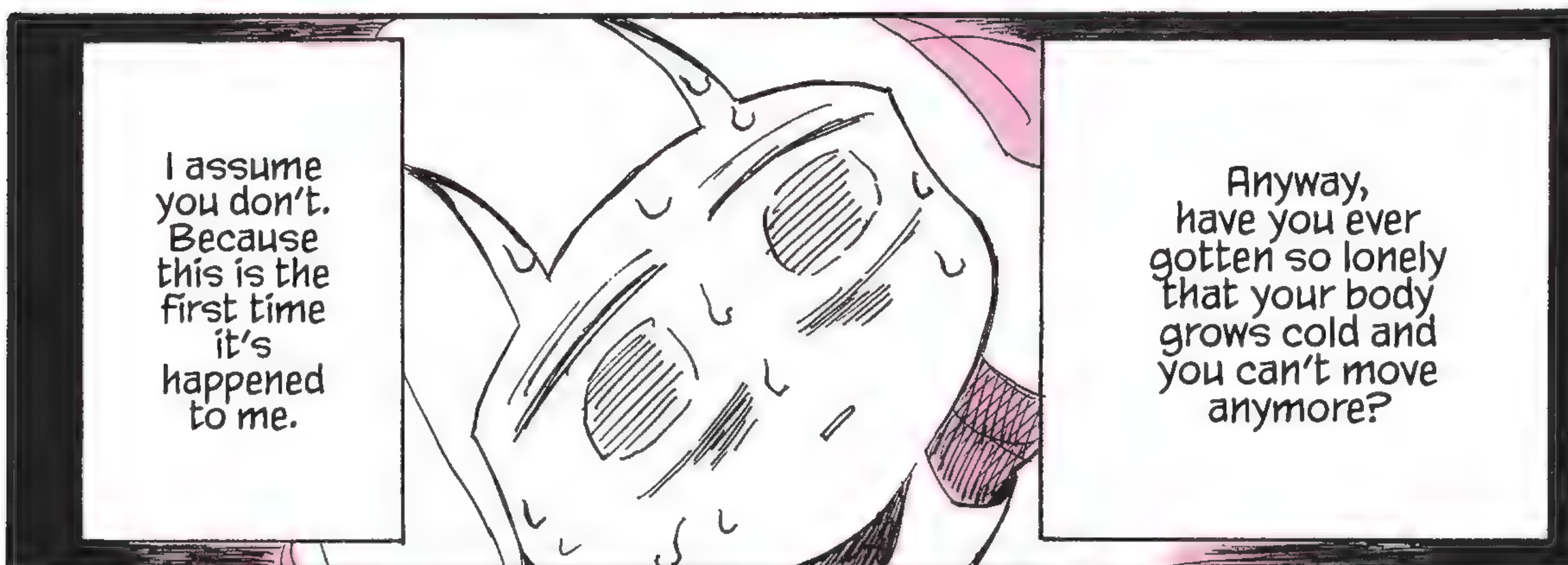
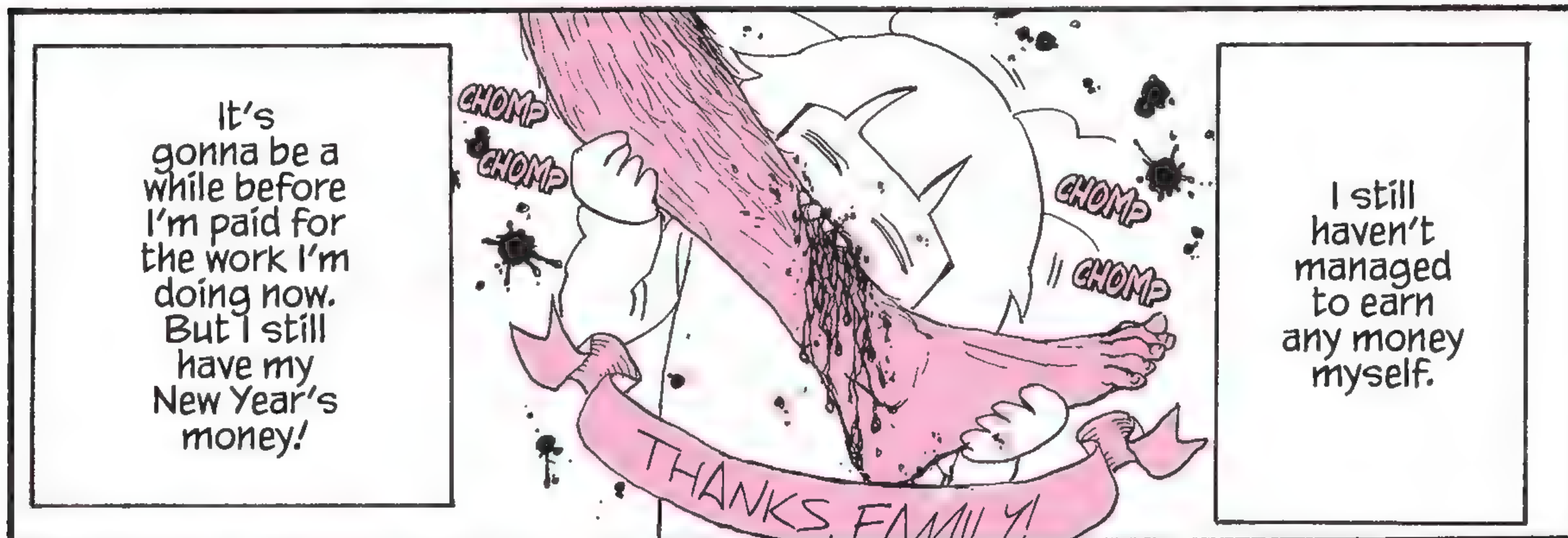


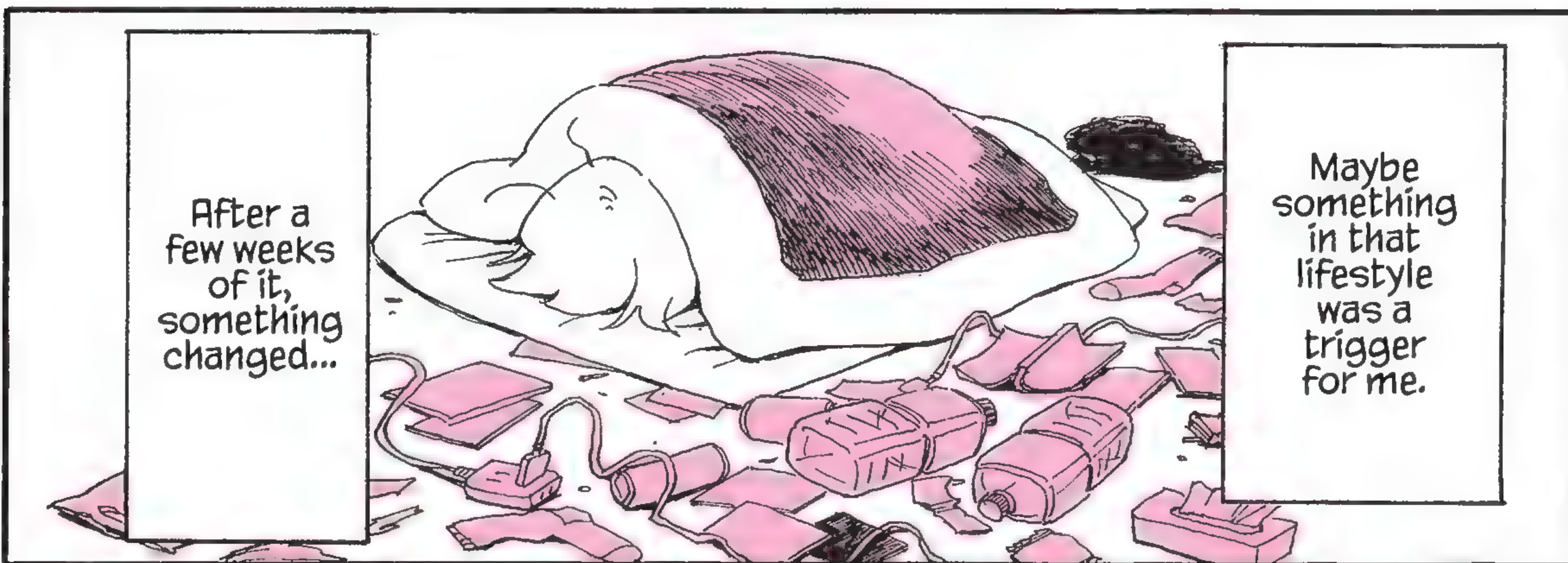
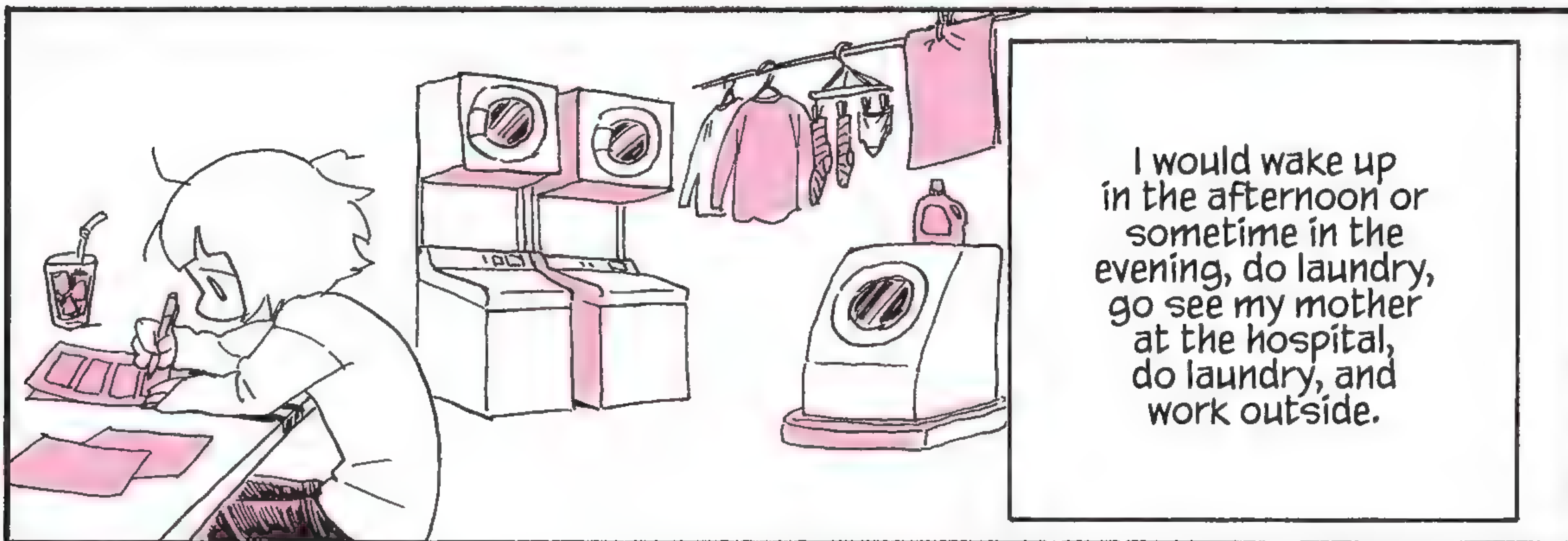
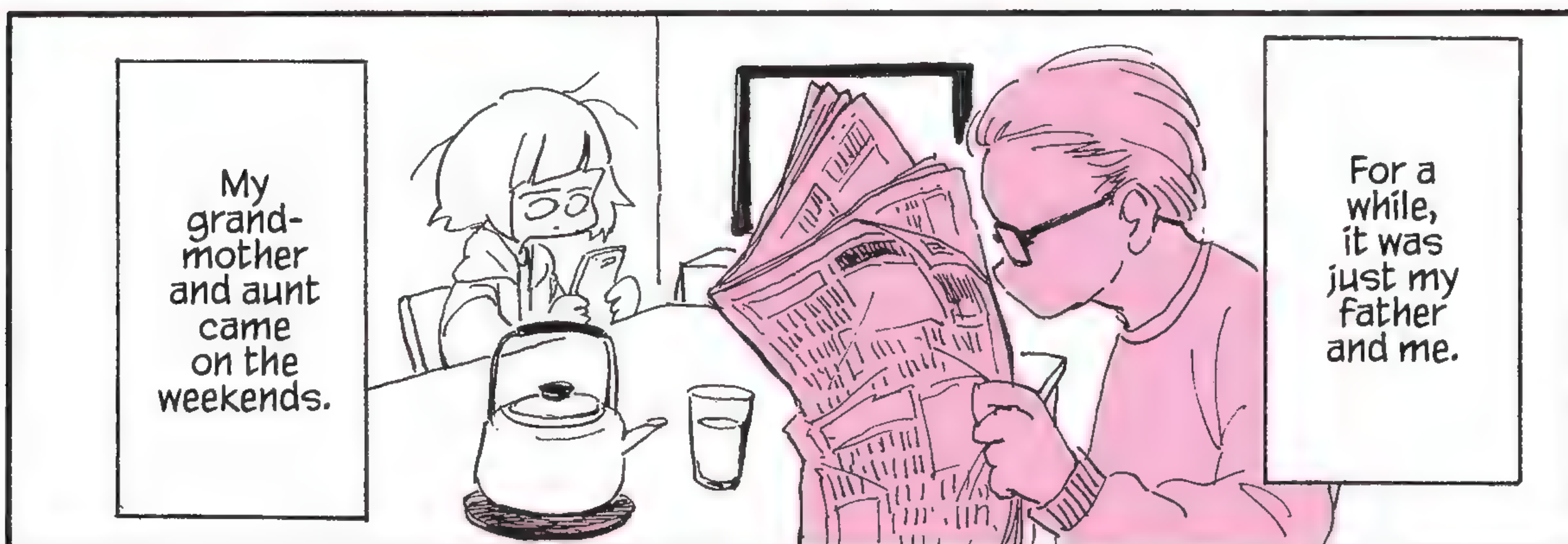




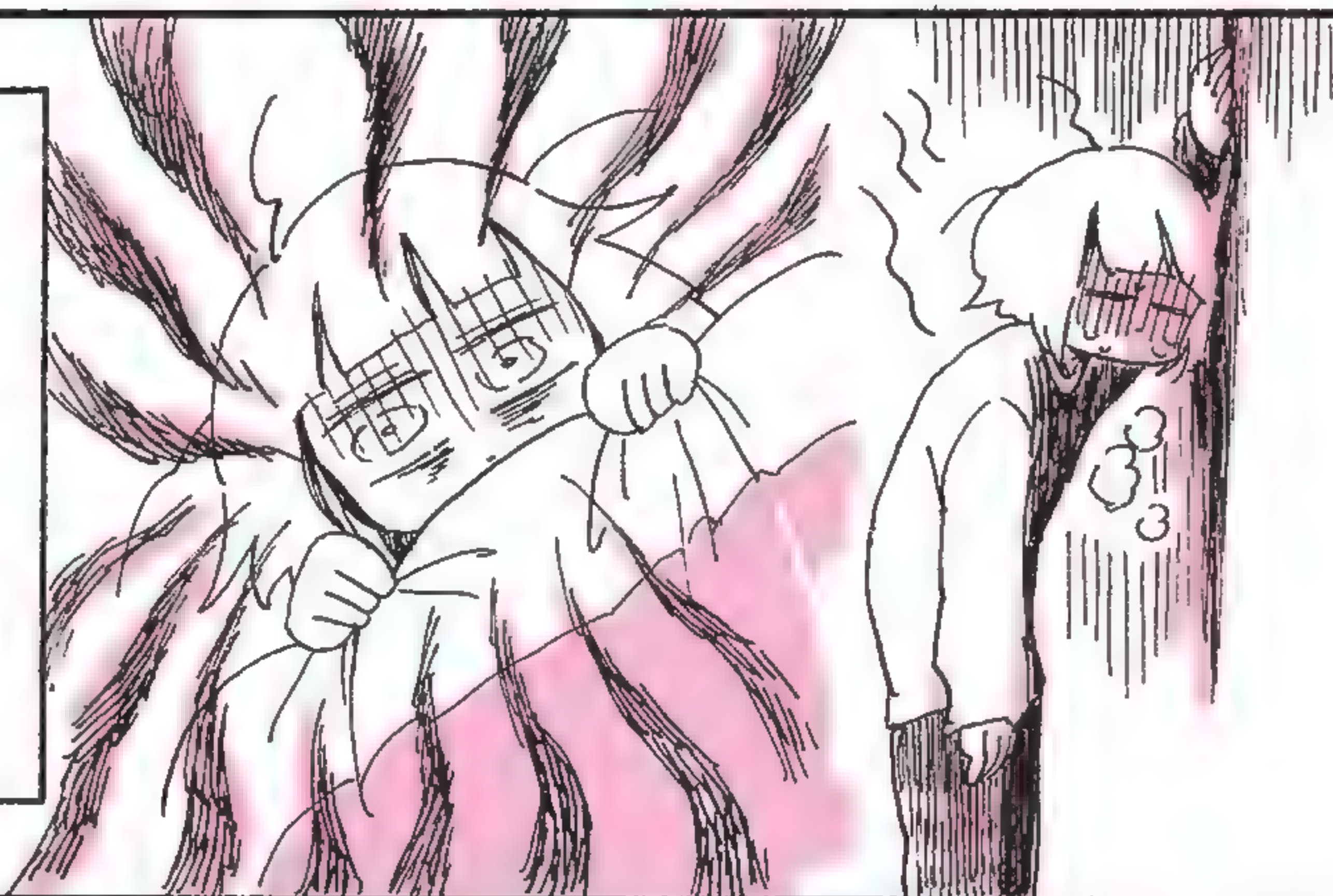


My
Solo
Exchange
Diary



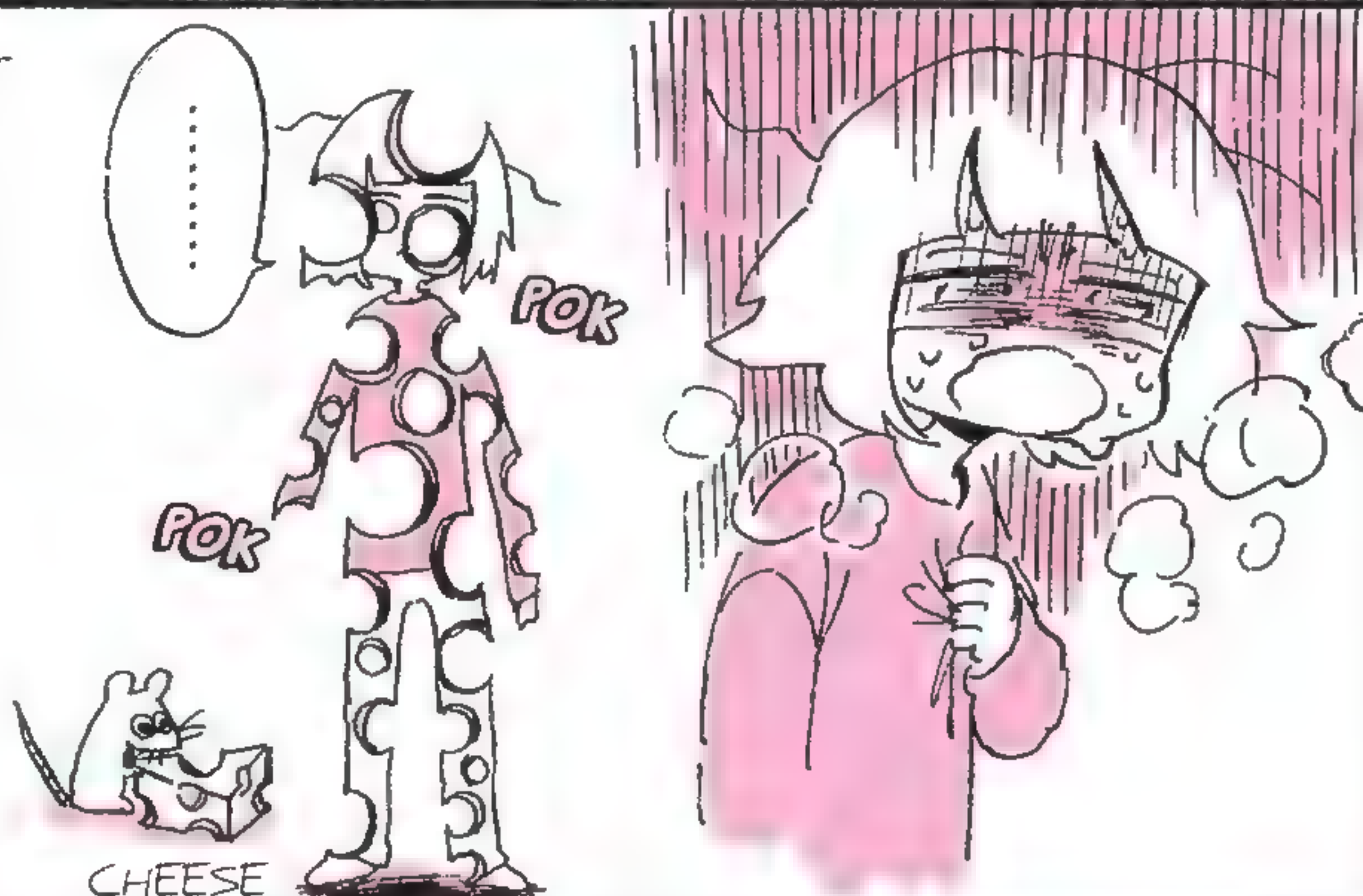


I couldn't get up, but I couldn't sleep, either. And even if I managed to sleep, I still felt exhausted, somehow.



I felt more sluggish and tired than usual.

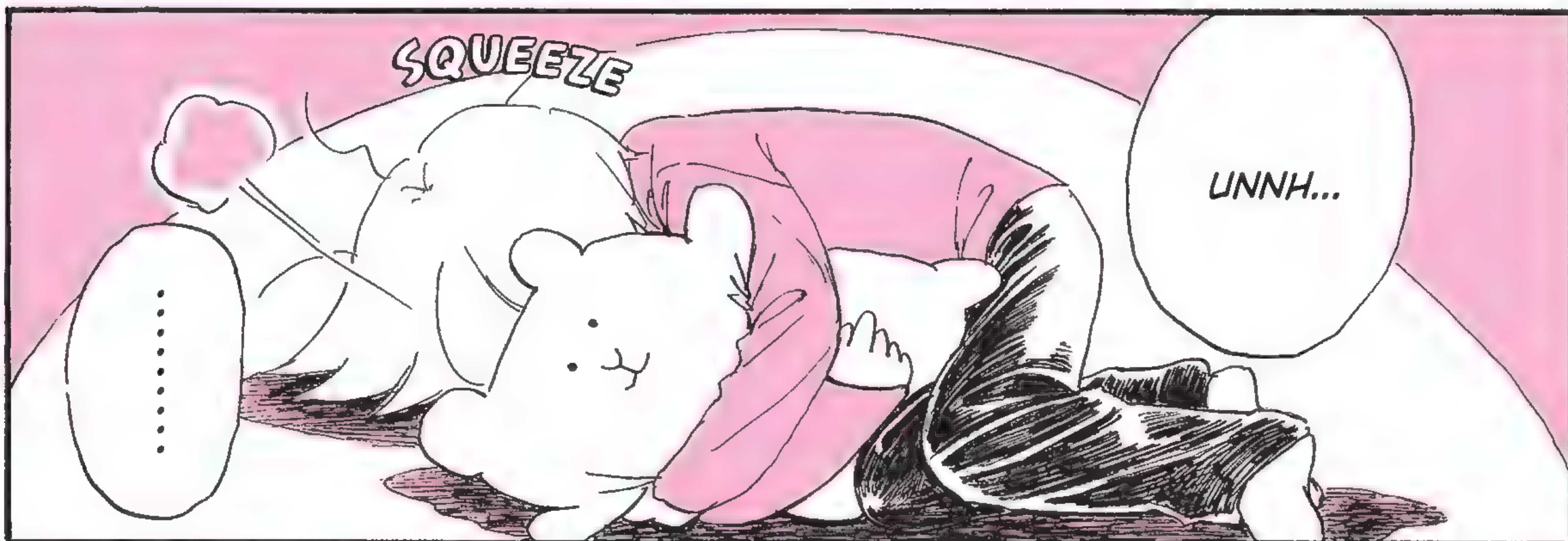
I felt like I was made of holes.



My breathing was sluggish, too--so it was hard to breathe. My chest hurt.

SQUEEZE

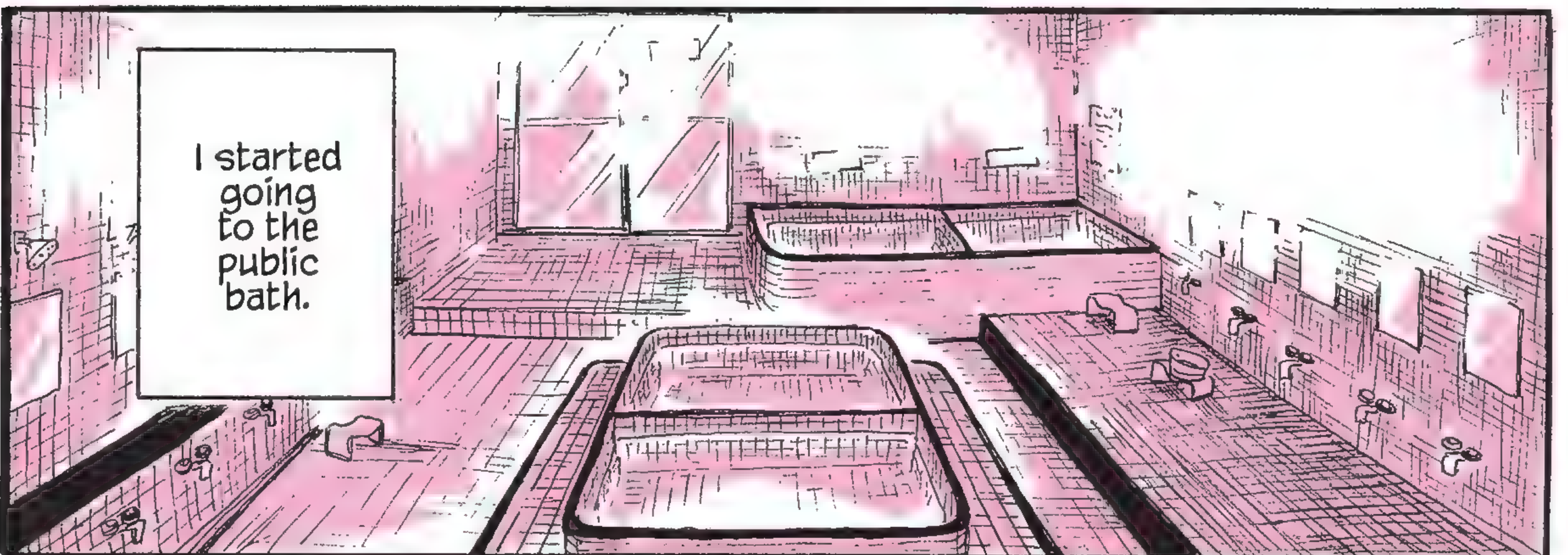
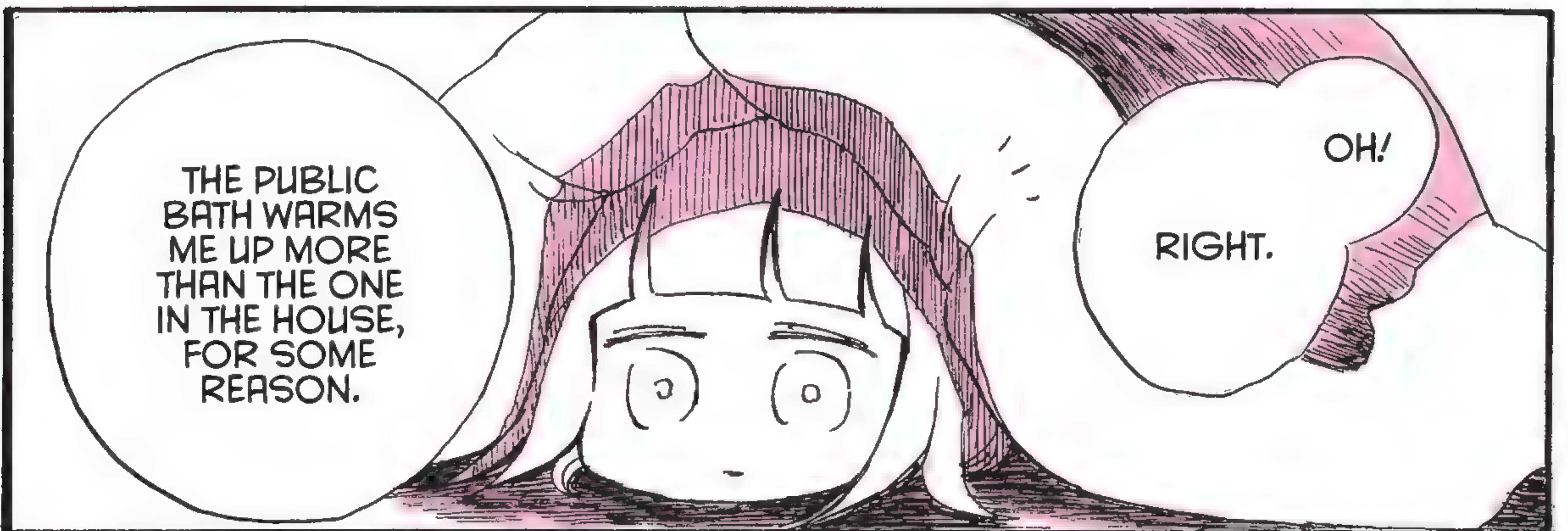
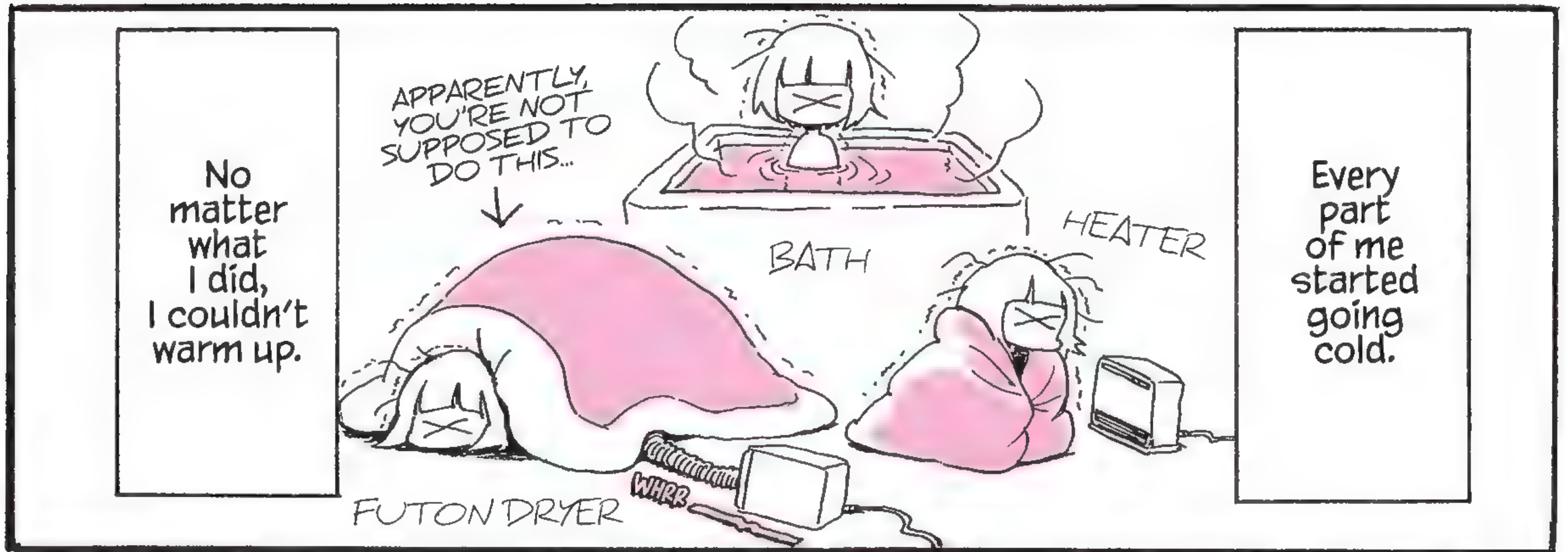
UNNH...



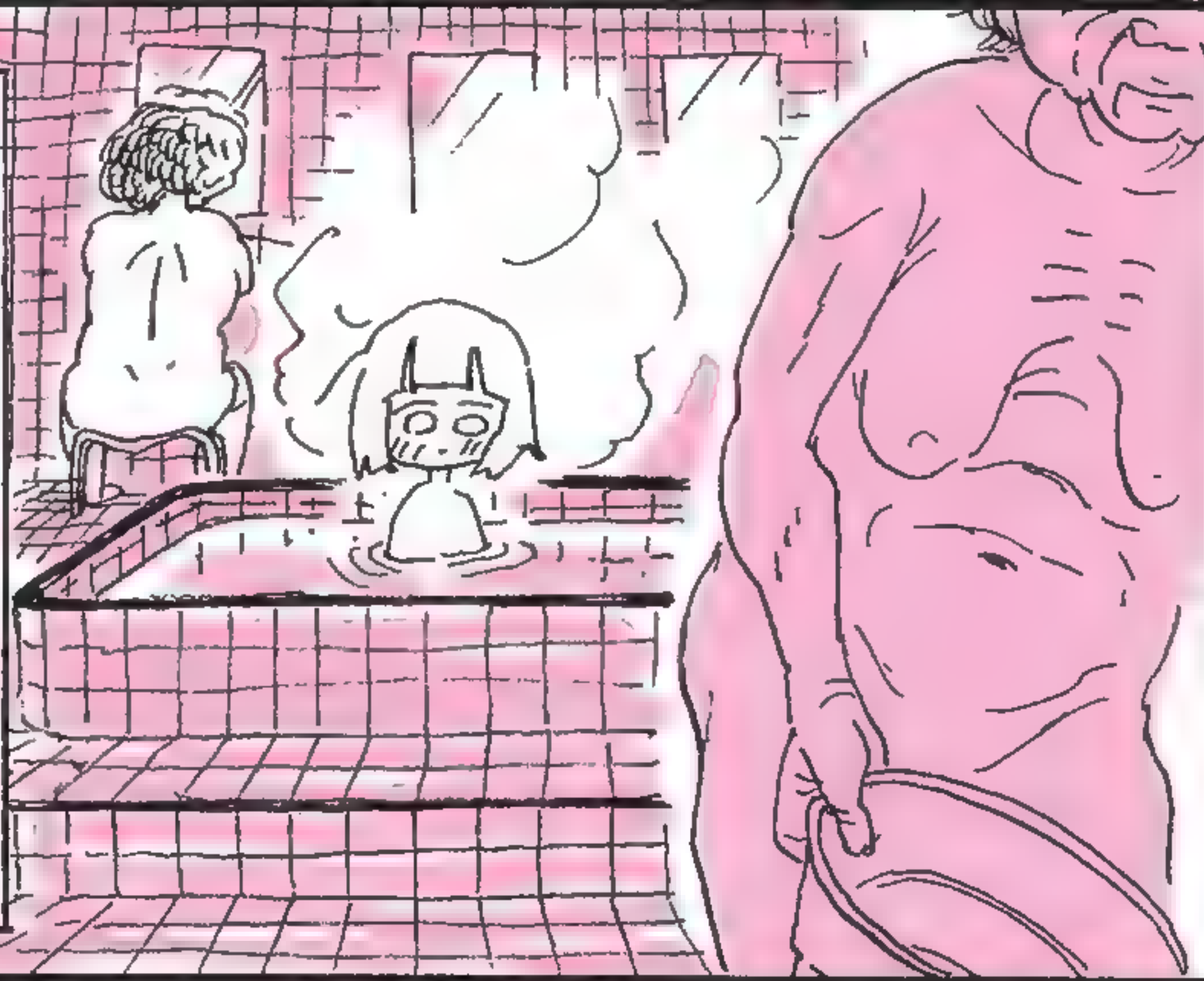
Pwump

When I hugged my stuffed animals, my chest got ice cold and hurt even more.





More than anything else, it was both nice and a pleasant change to get in the bath with strangers, totally naked and with naked eyes (of less than 20/20 vision).



The water never gets cold there. It simmers you into warmth.

it felt like the walls between people infinitely approached zero, and my heart was warmed, too.



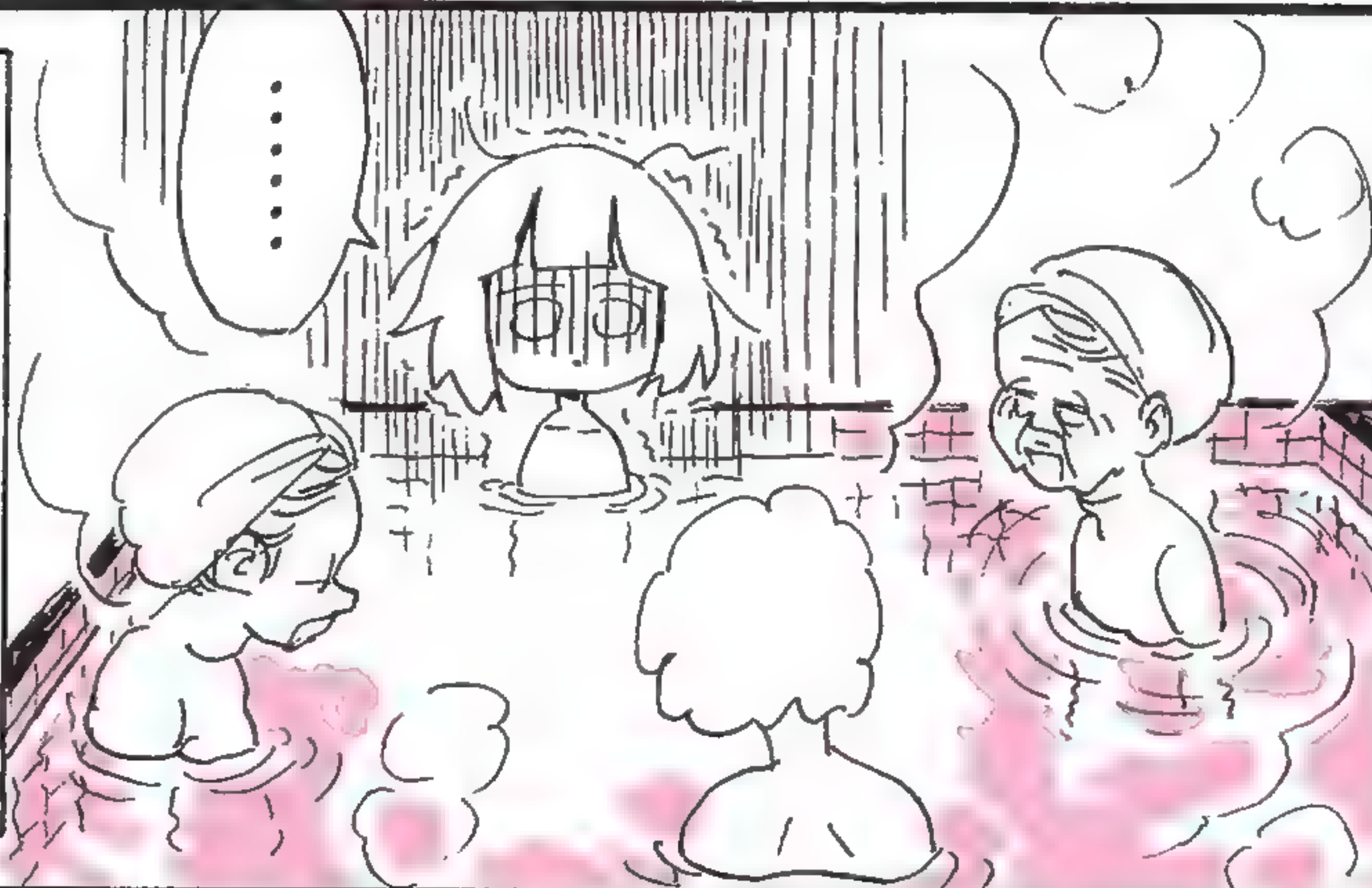
When I got in the bath and closed my eyes, listening to all those voices in that world...

I'M COLD AGAIN!!

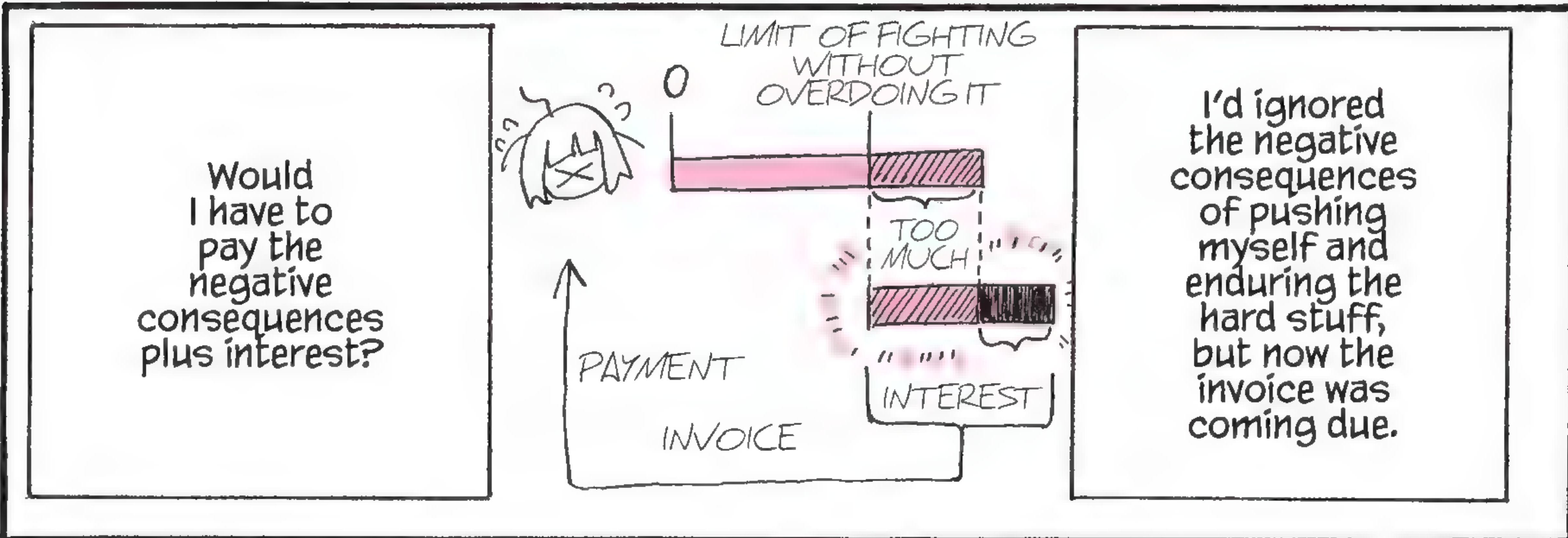
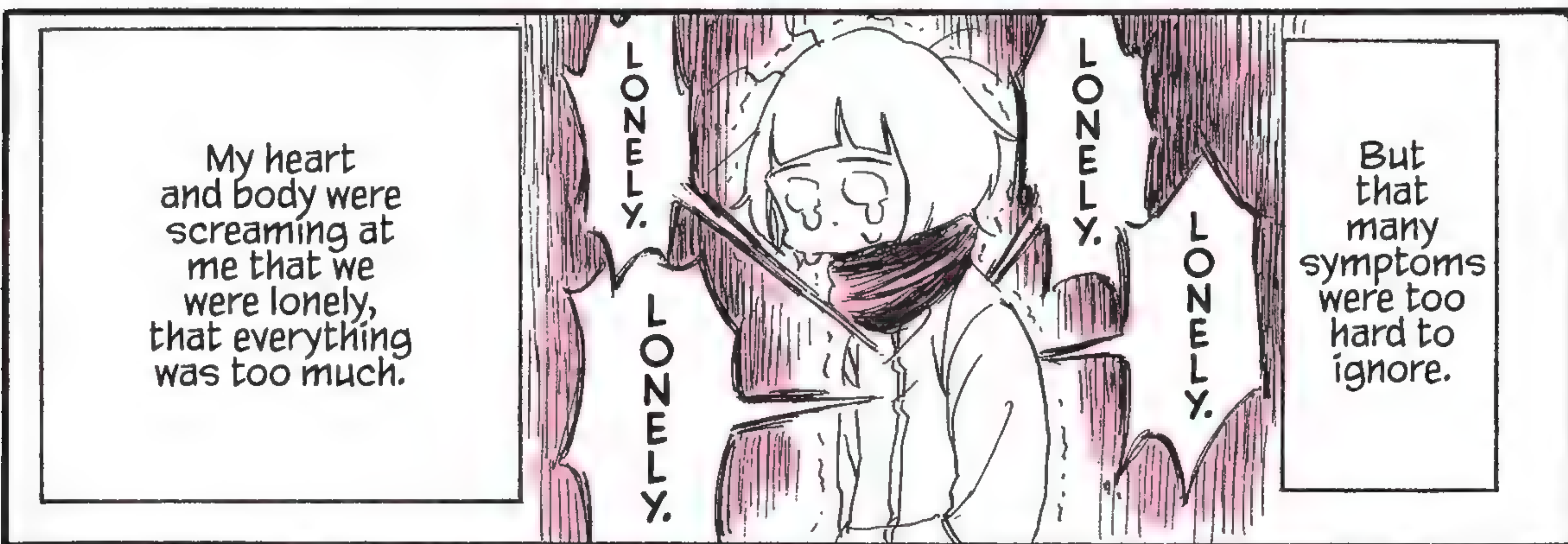


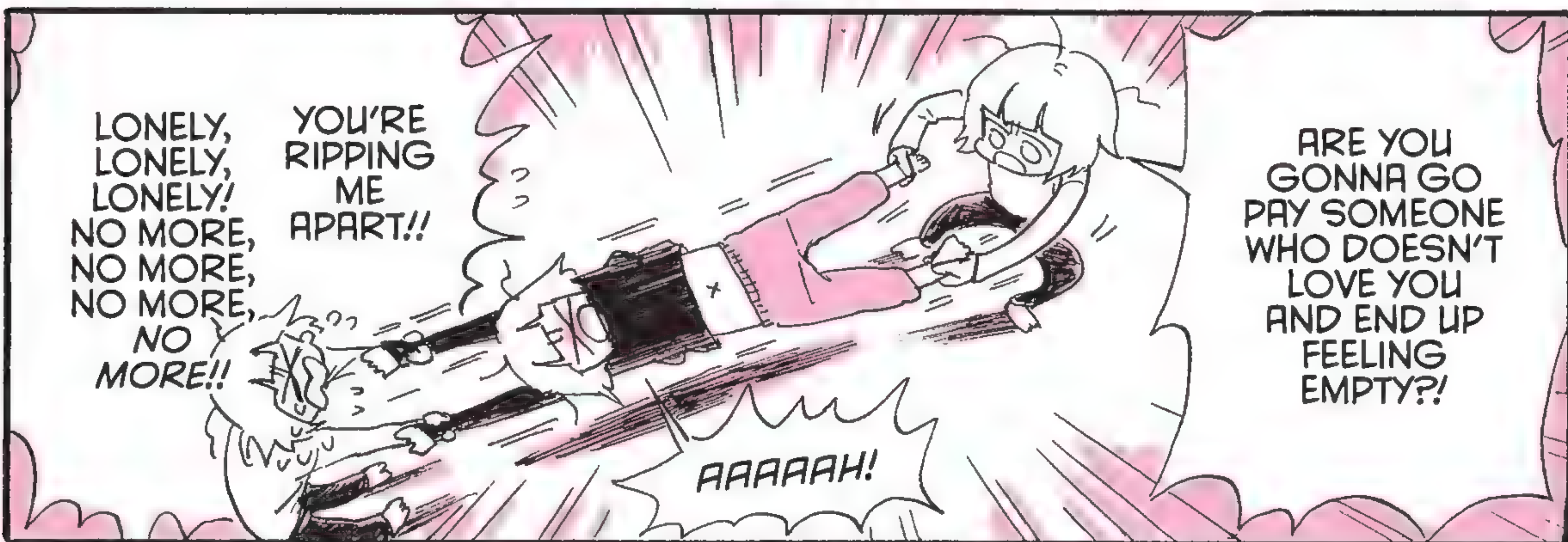
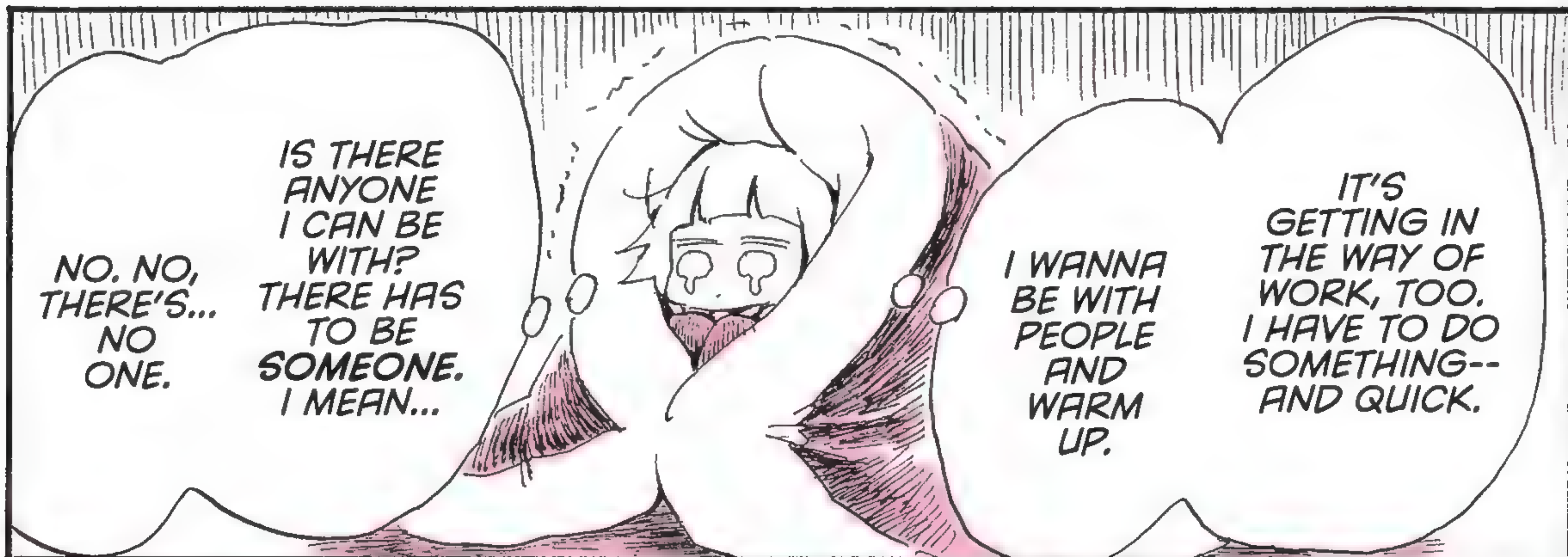
But a few days later...

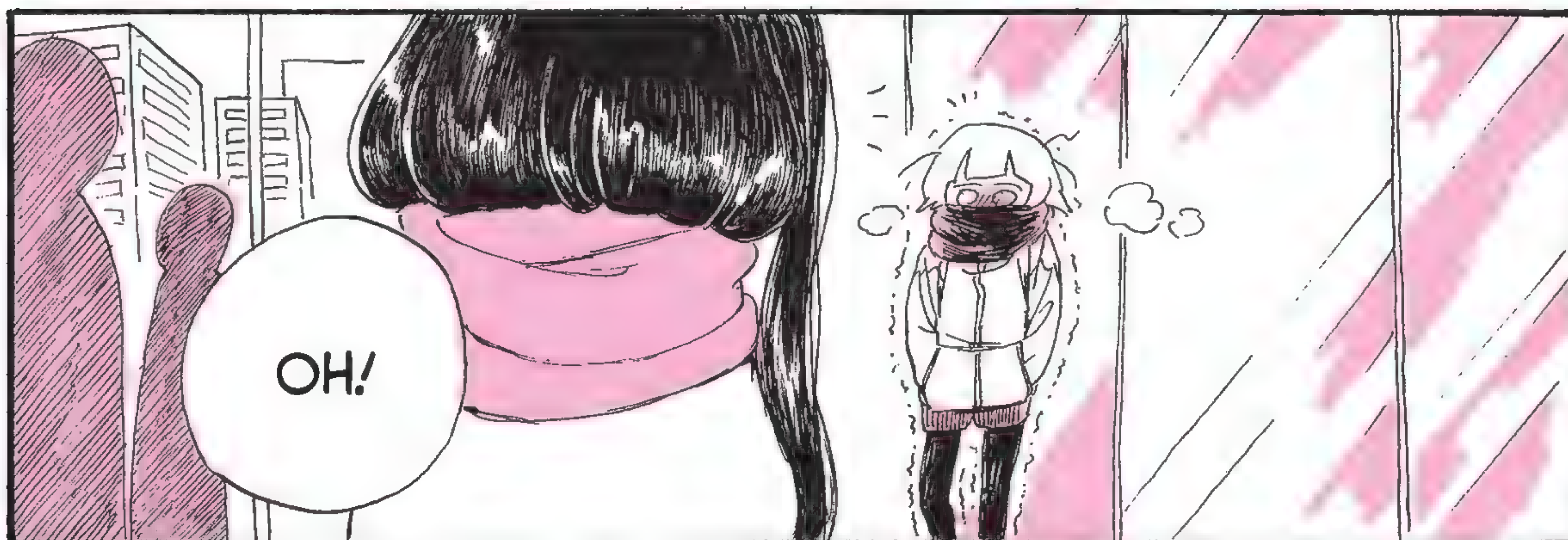
the core of my heart stayed completely chilled. My body wouldn't warm up at all, anymore.

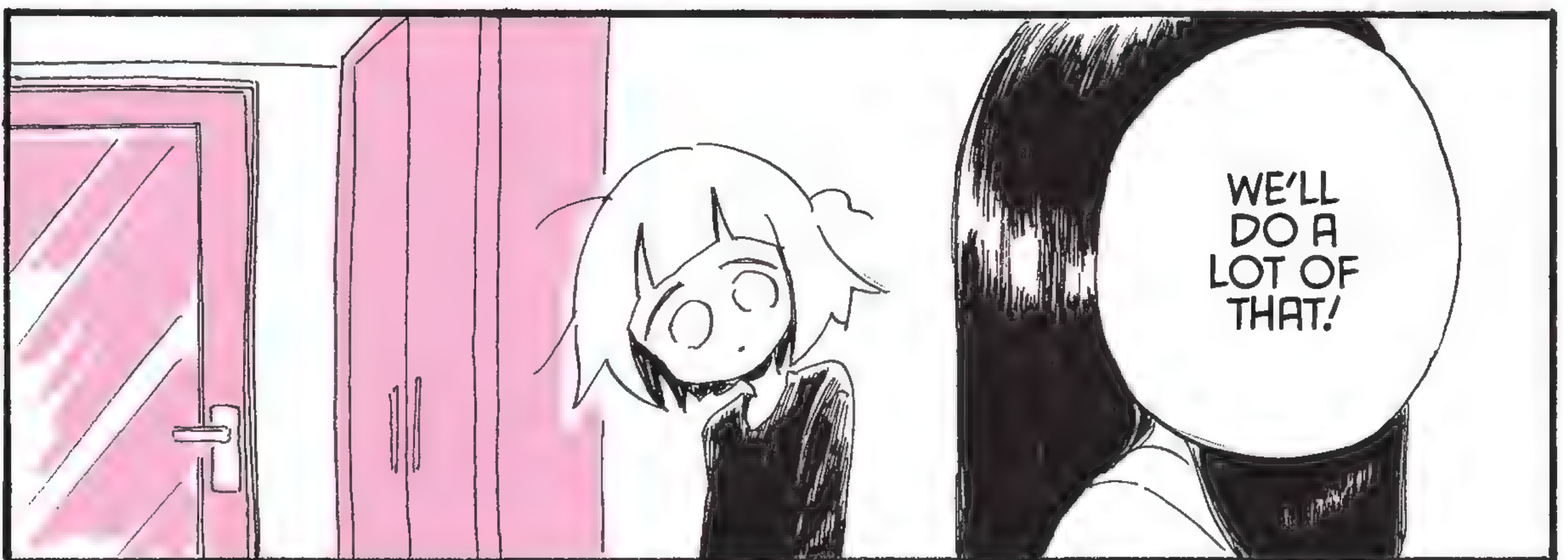
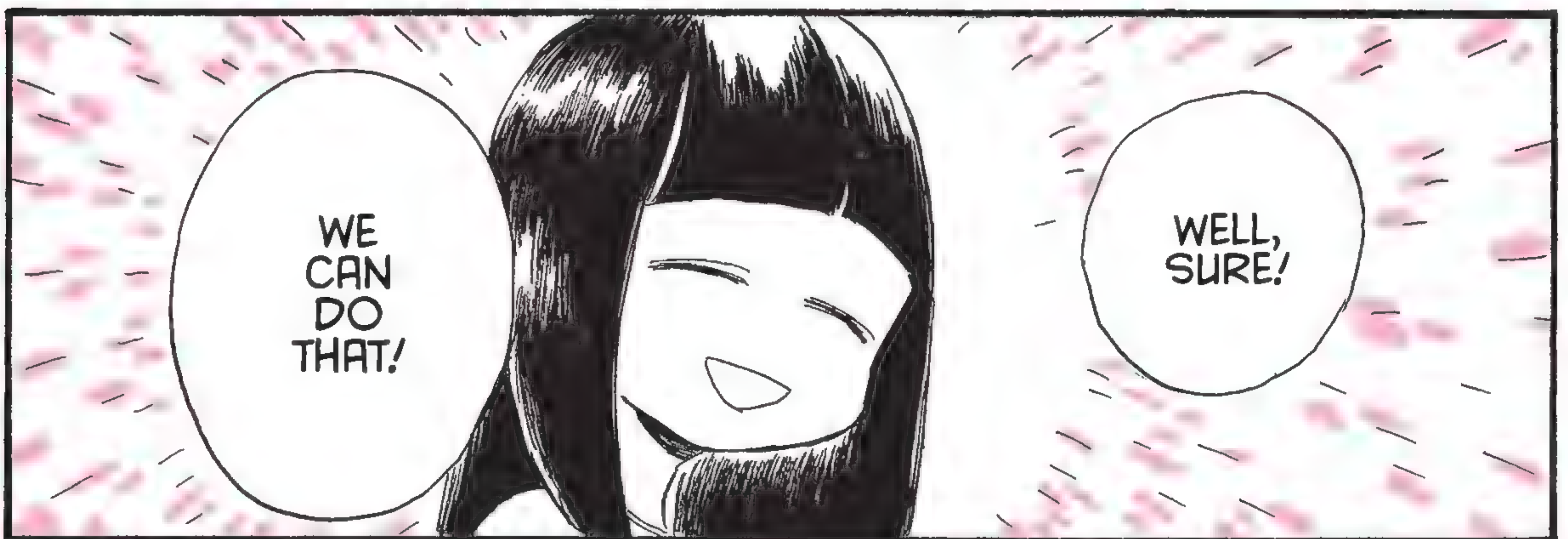
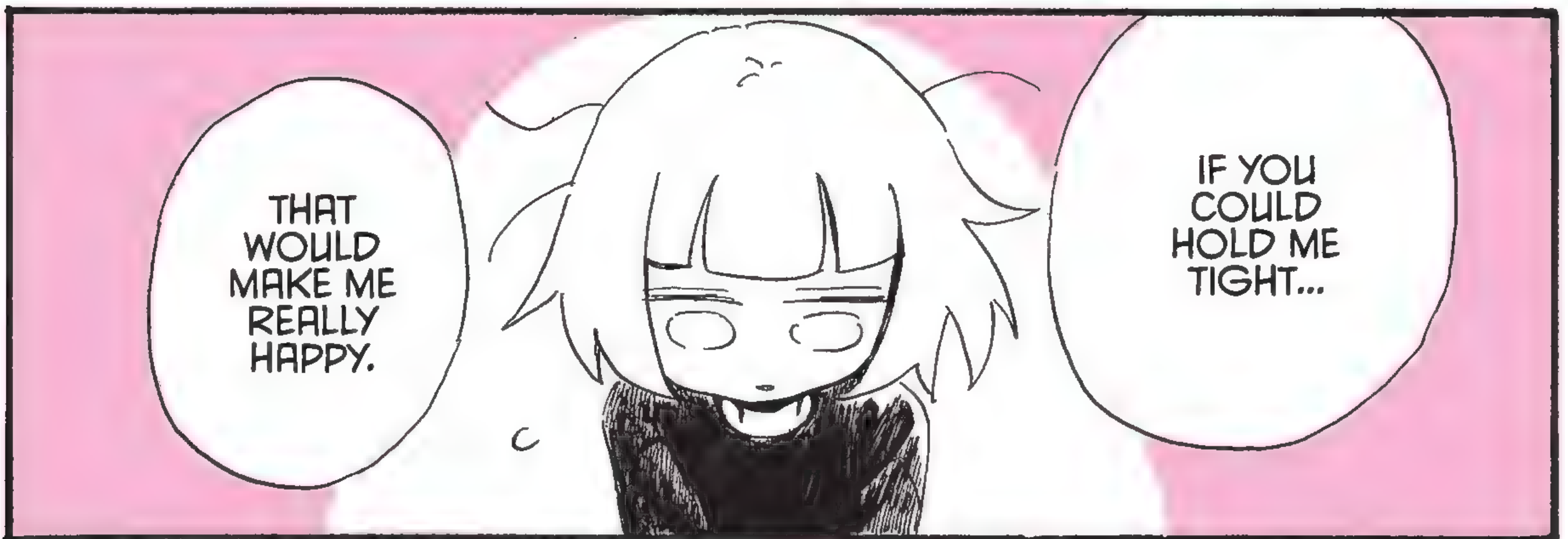
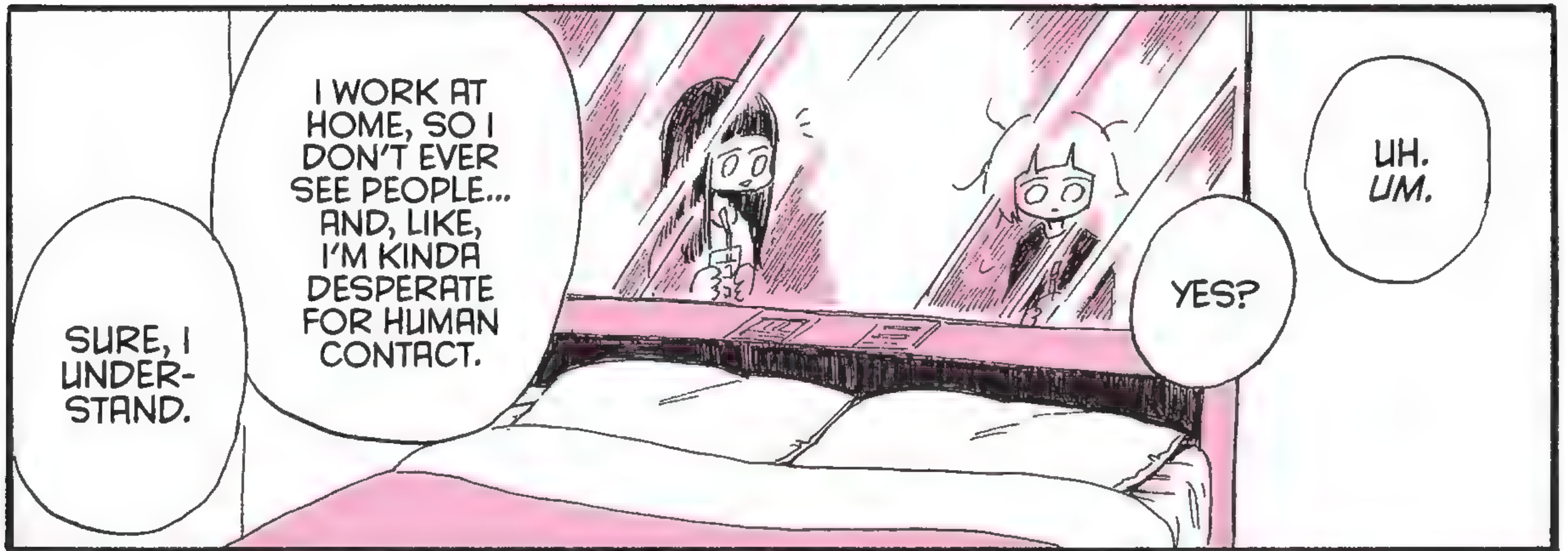


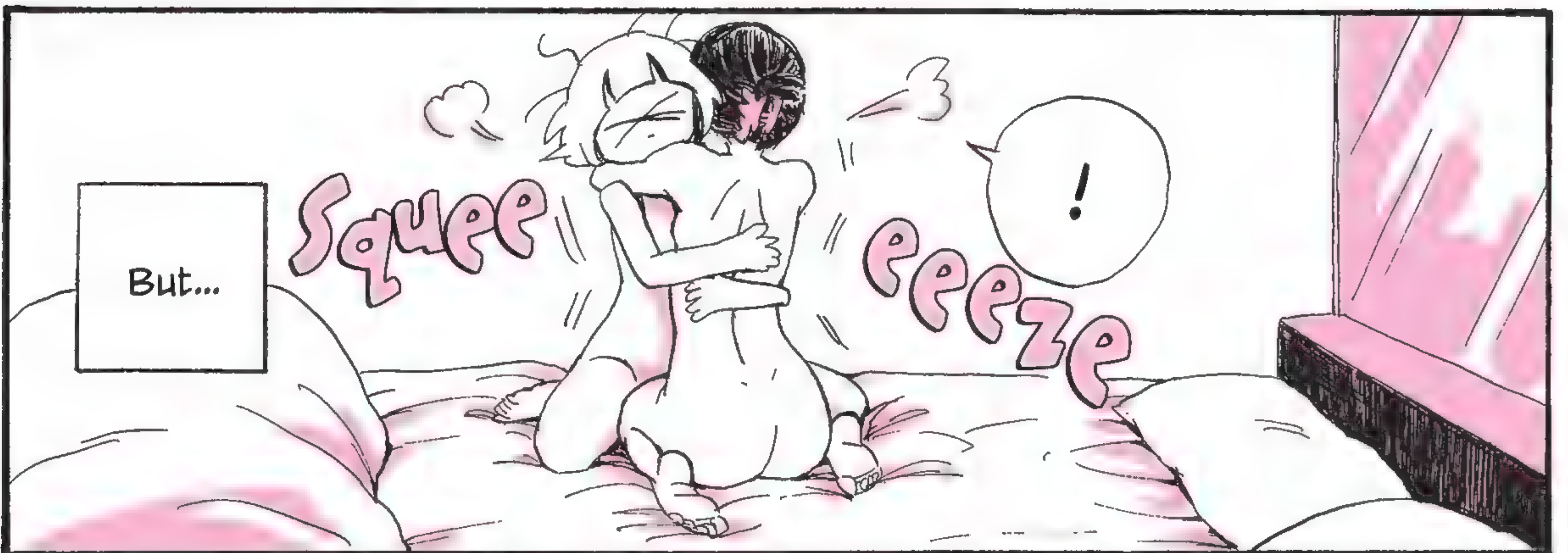
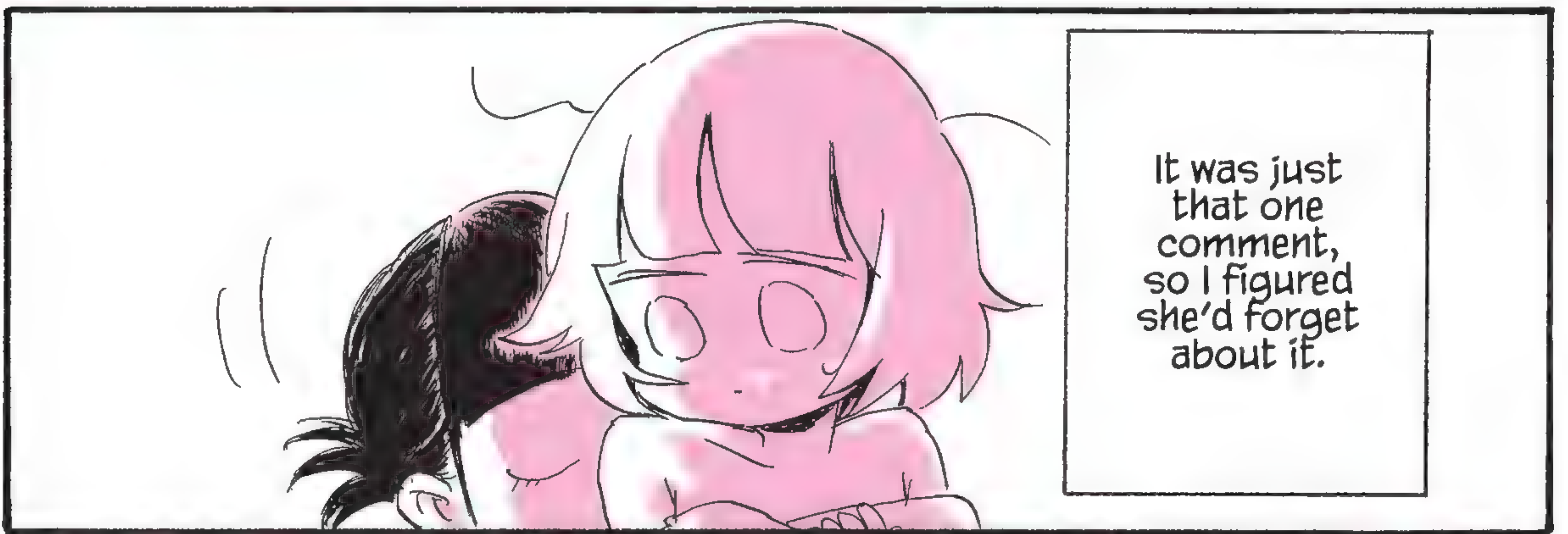
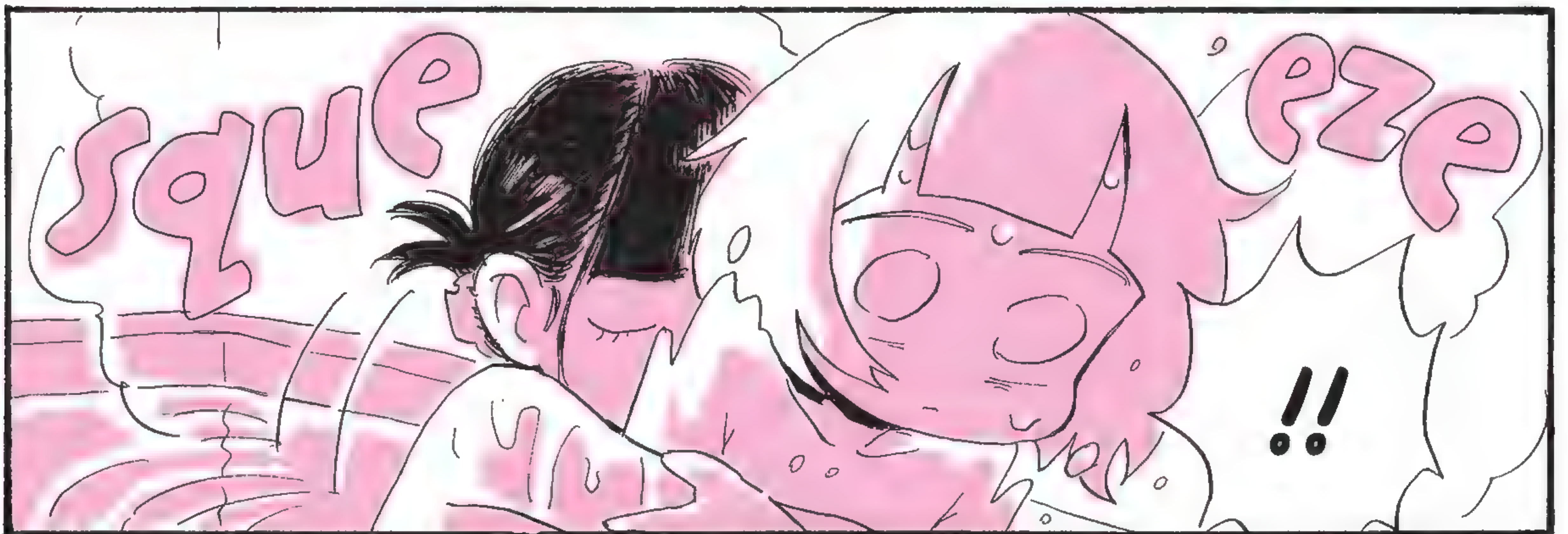
Whether the bath was booked for a private event or full of people...

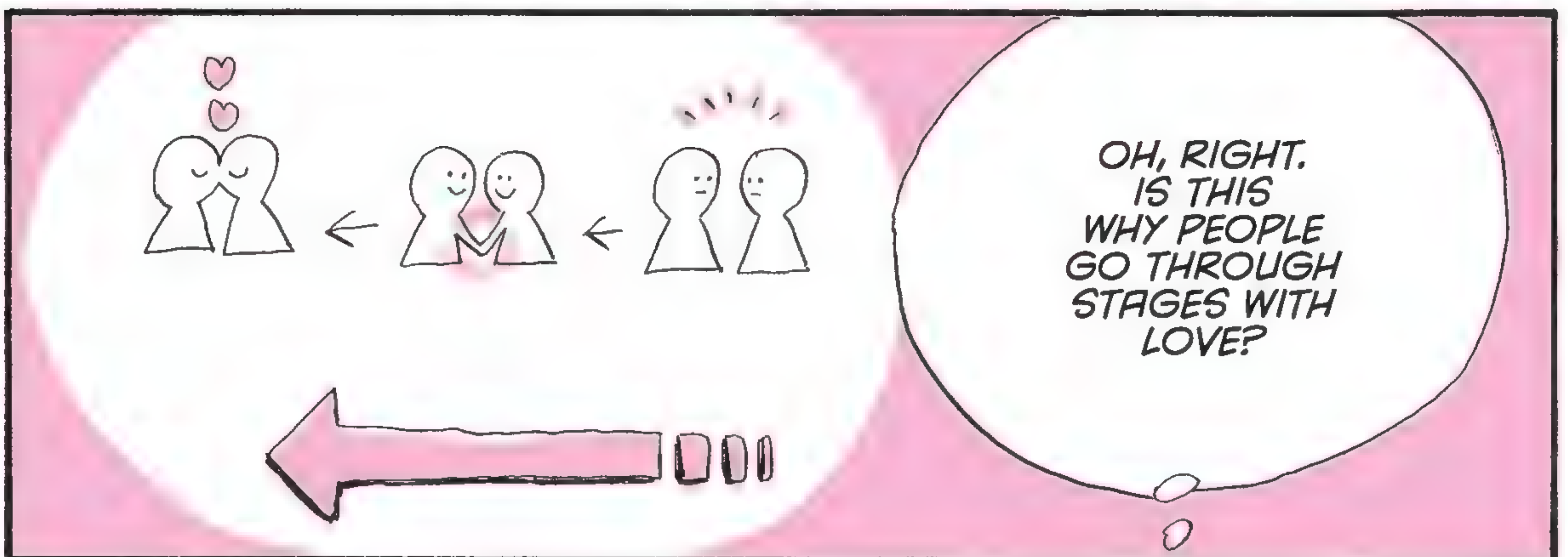
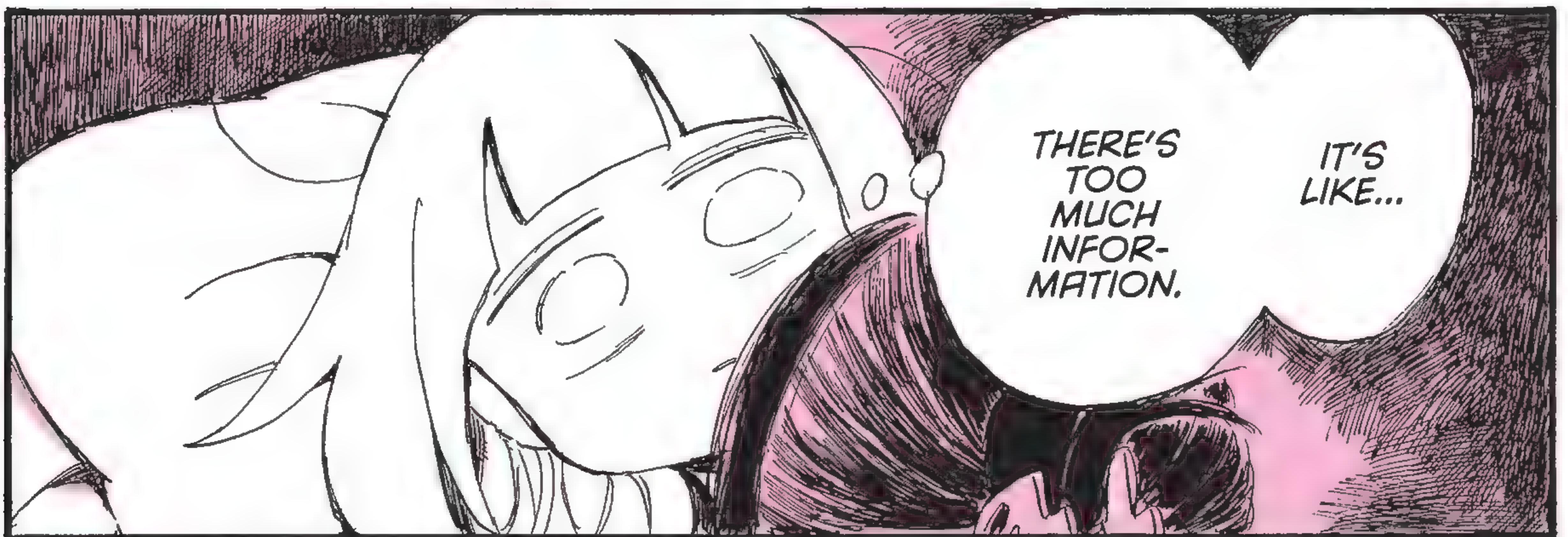
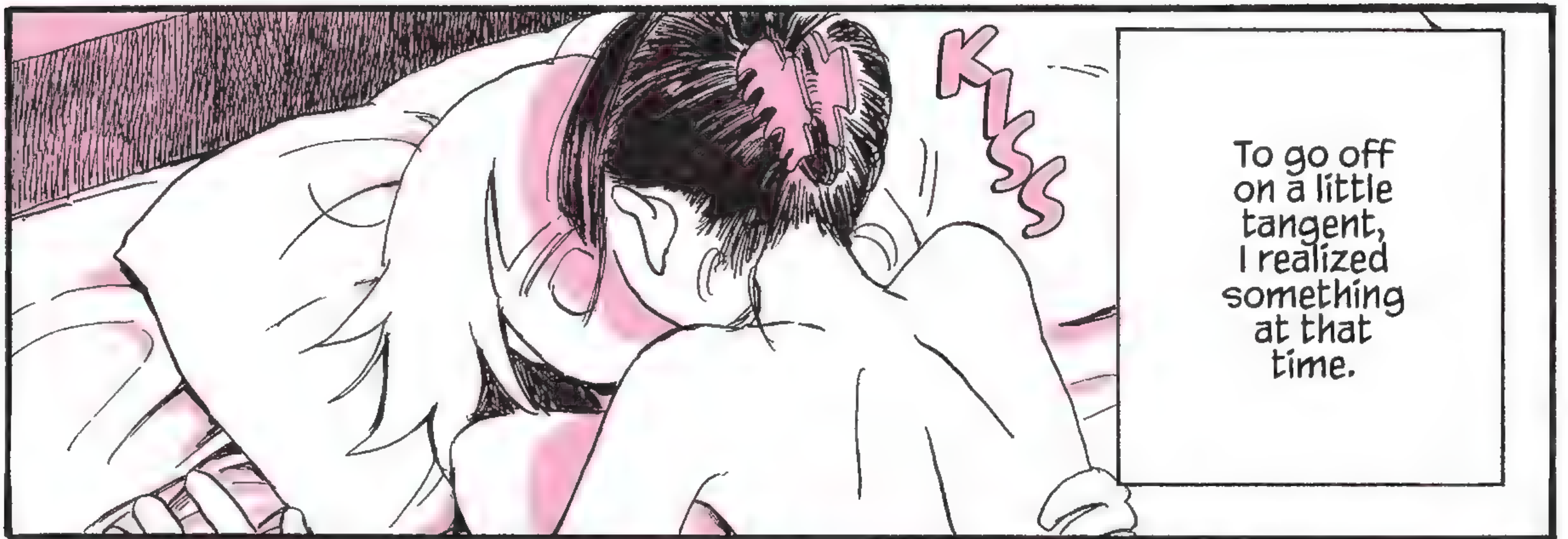




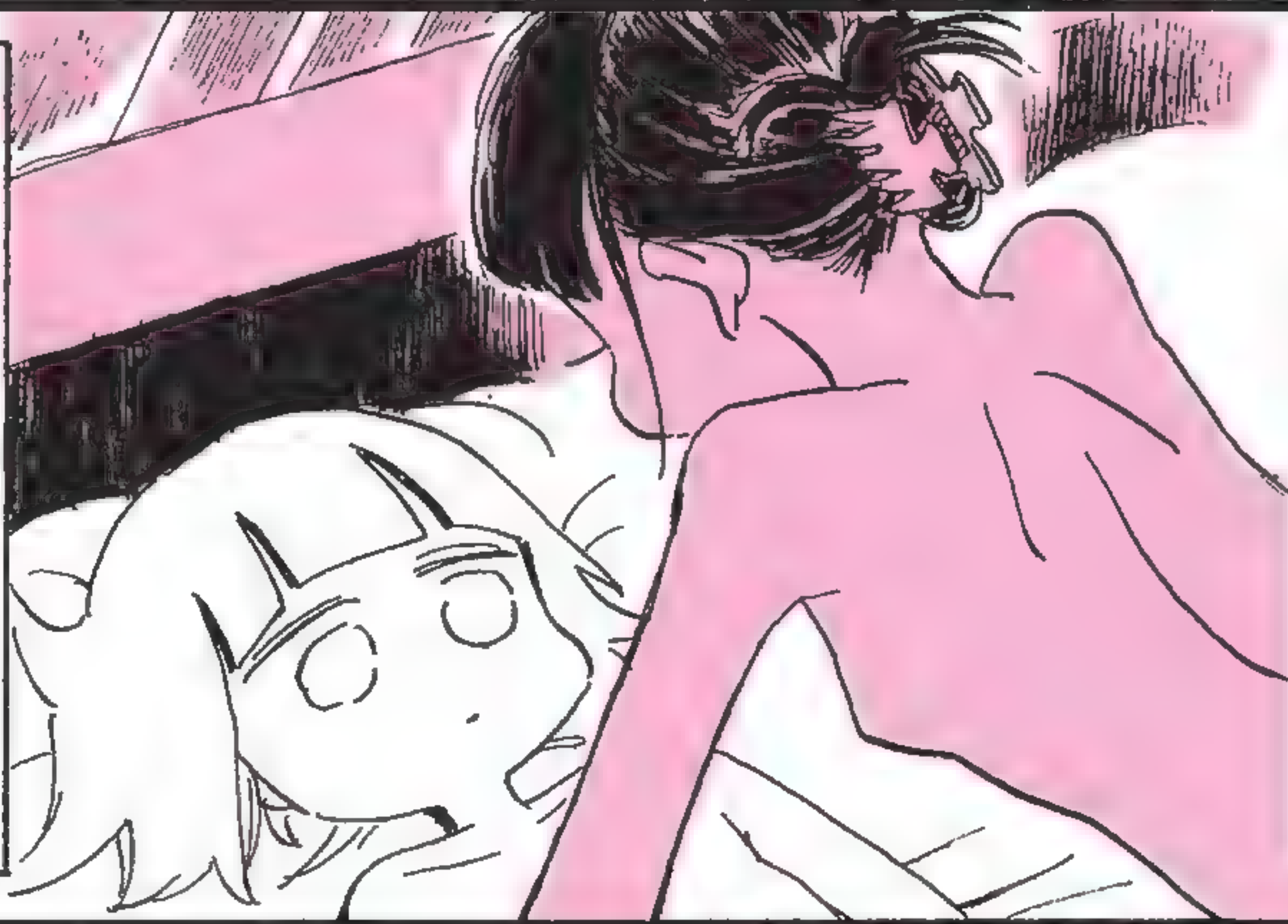






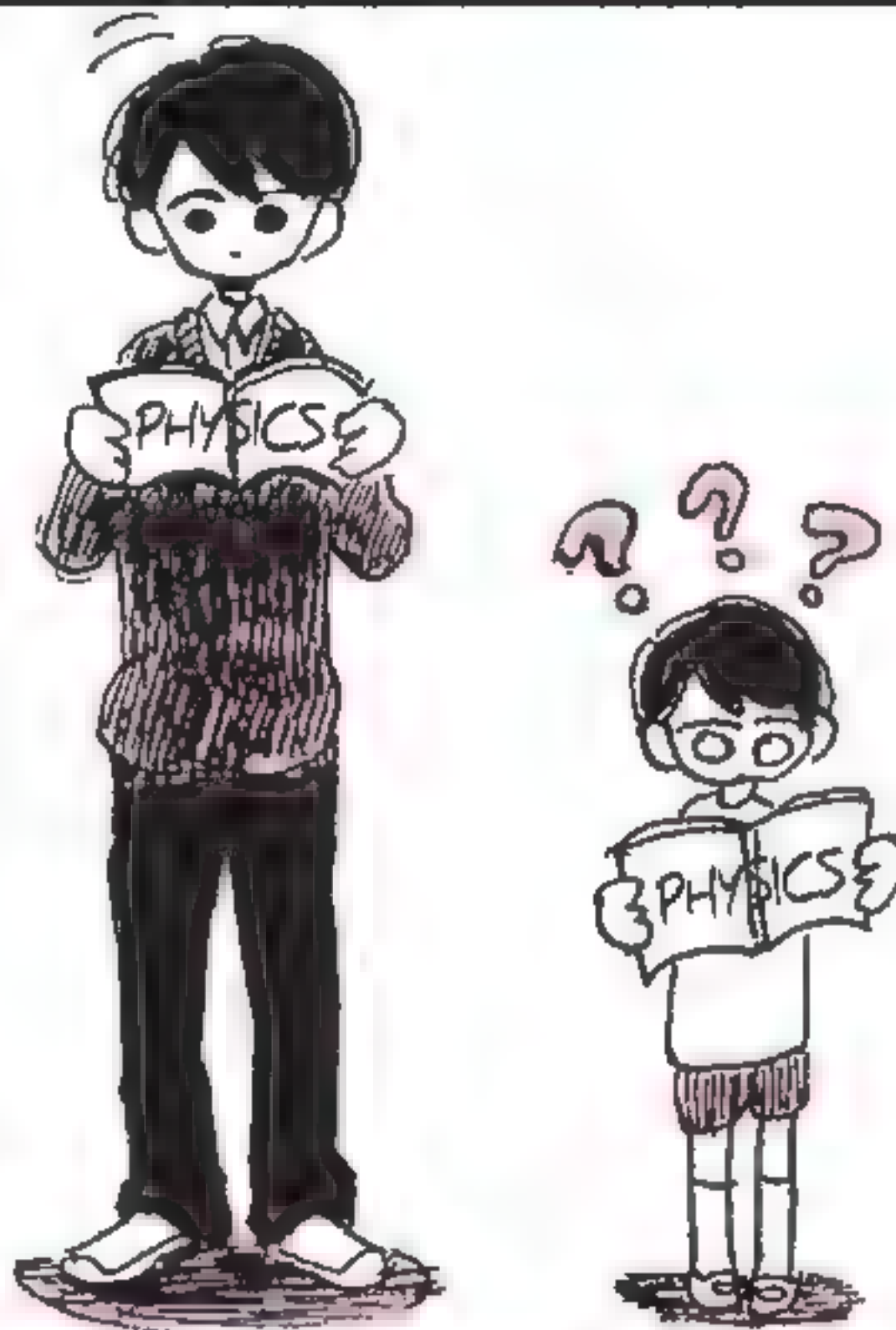


you
probably
get a lot
more out
of it.



If you move
seriously
through
the stages
when facing
another
person...

I think right
now I can only
understand
a certain
amount,
and the rest
of it just
gets lost.



Like, if a grade
school kid reads
a high school
textbook, what
percentage
of that
information
will they really
be able to
pick up?

being
squeezed
tightly was
still a huge
comfort
for me.



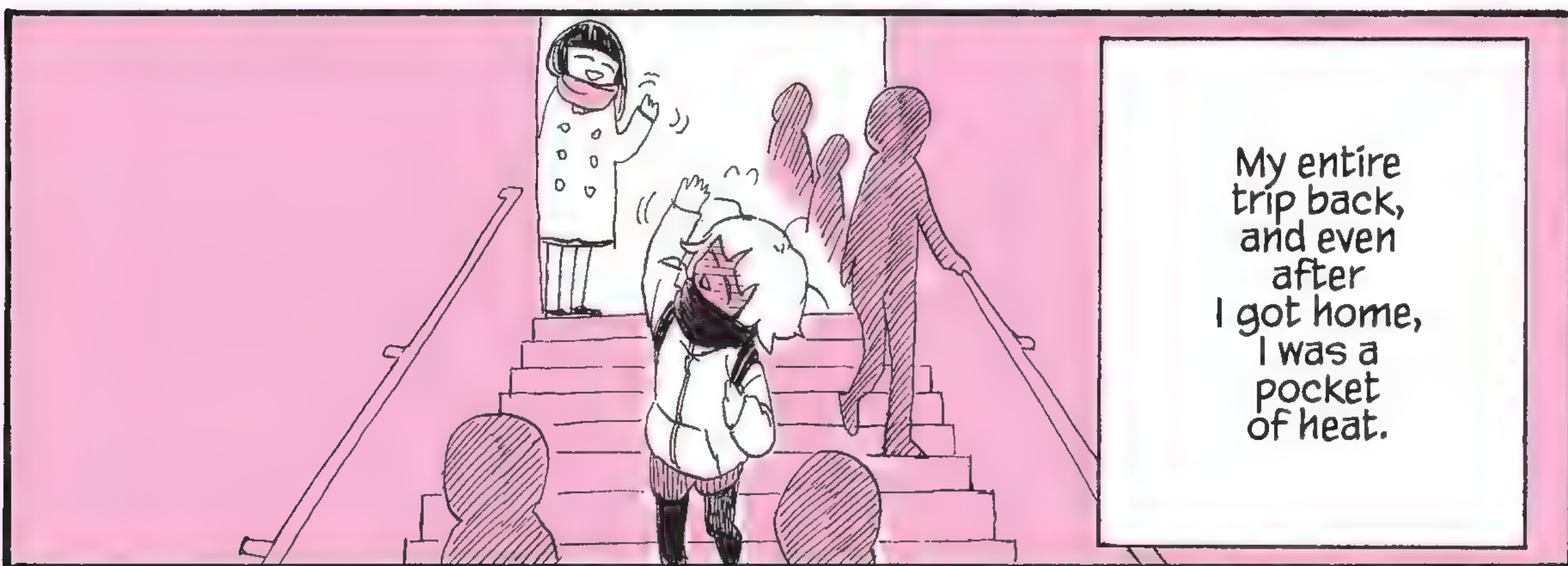
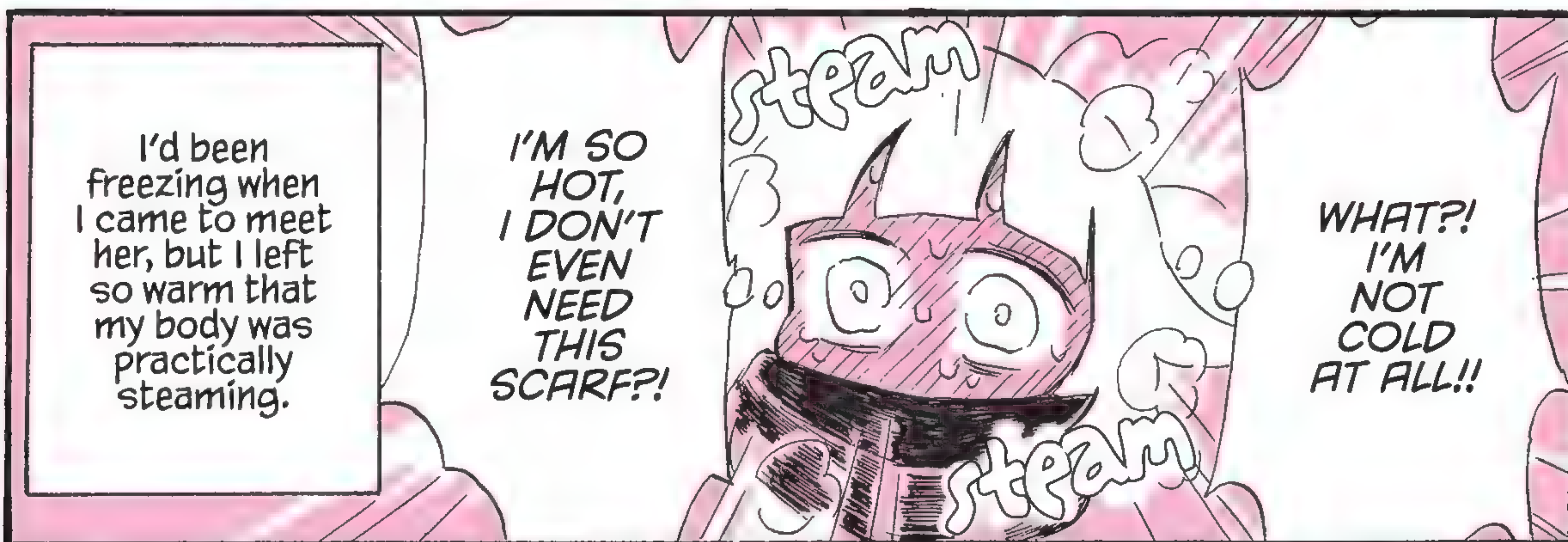
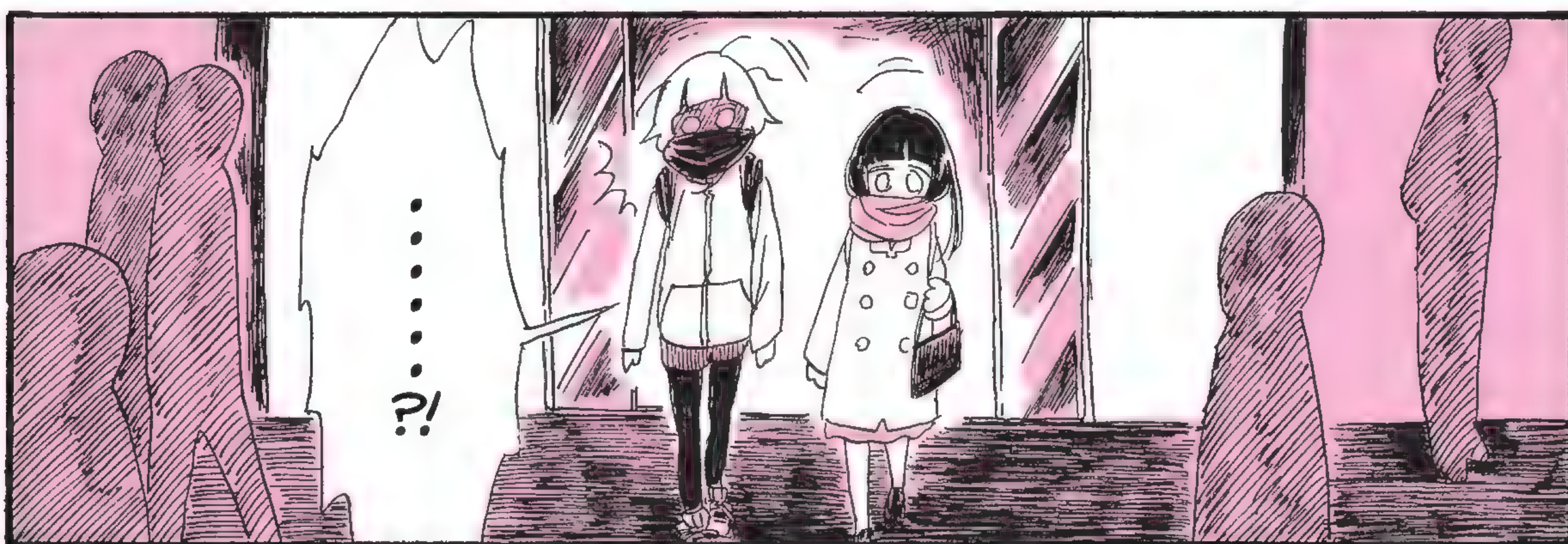
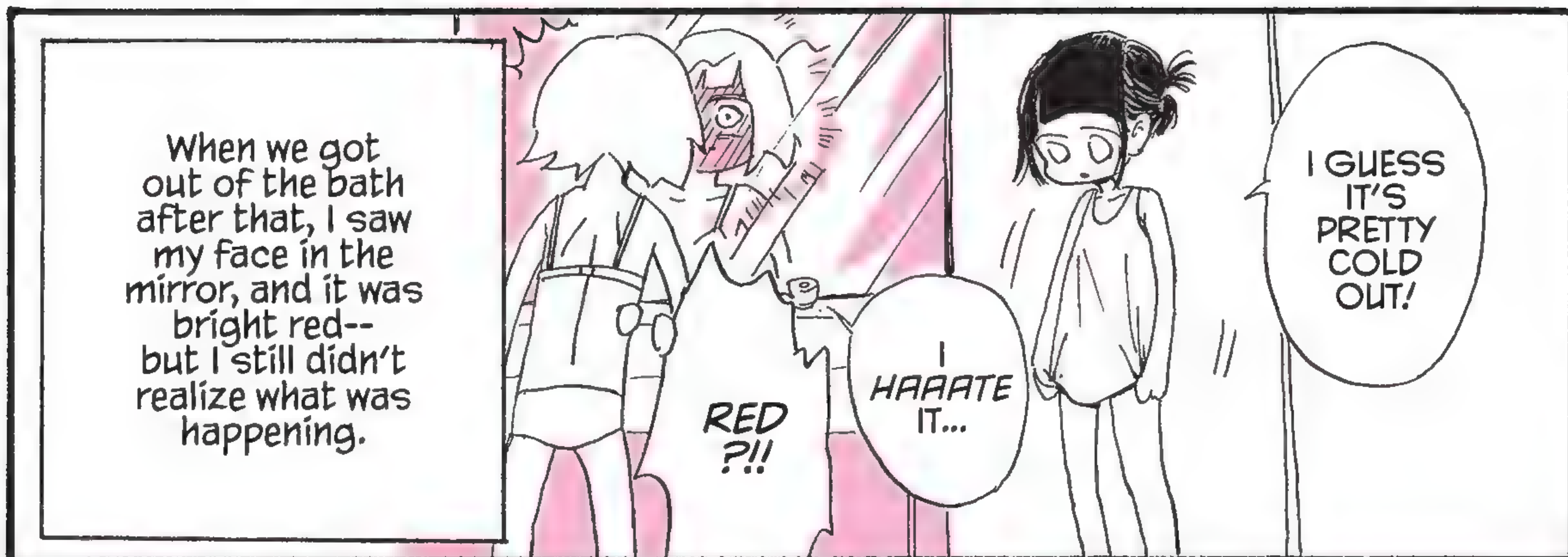
But just
like how
you can
write a
book in
simple words
that moves
the heart...

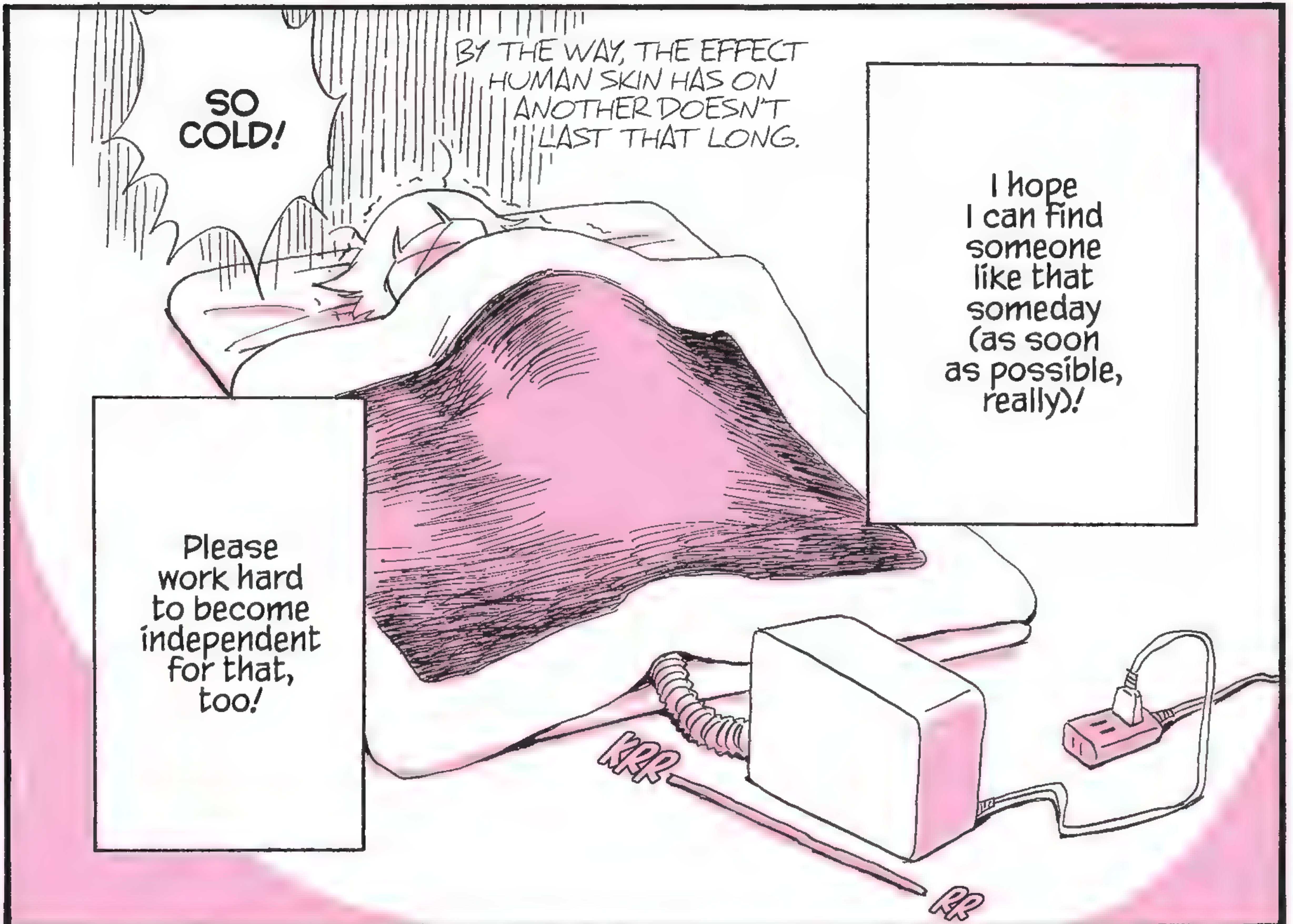
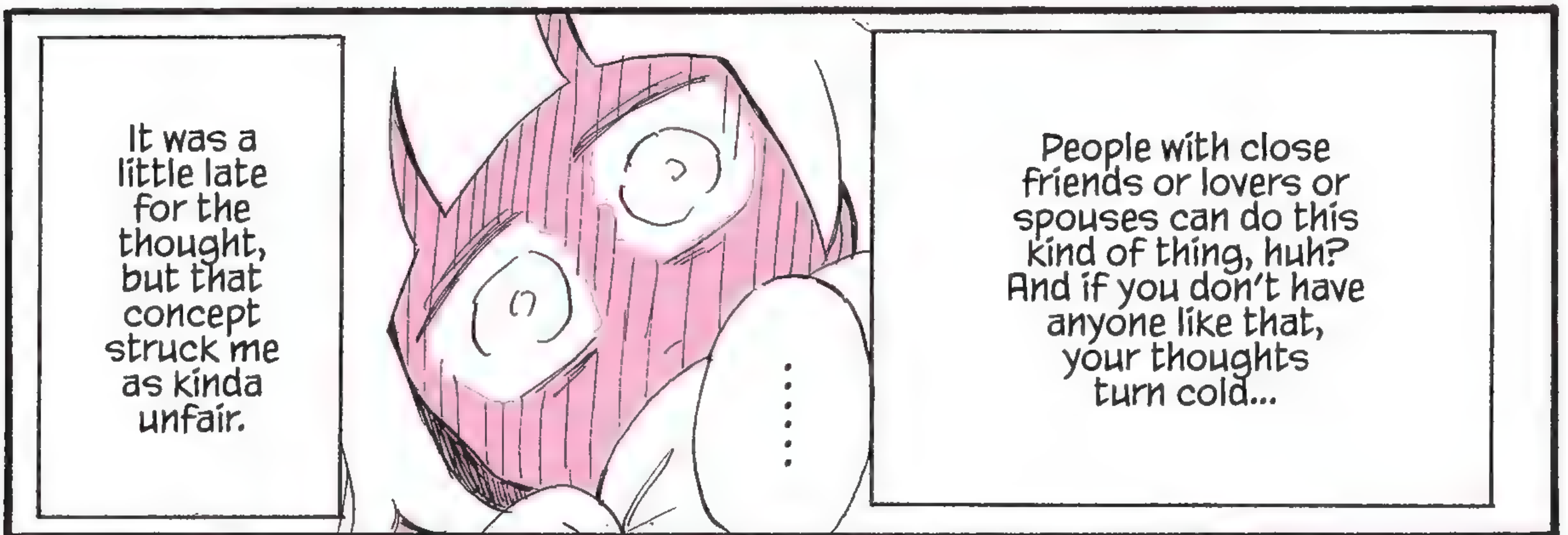
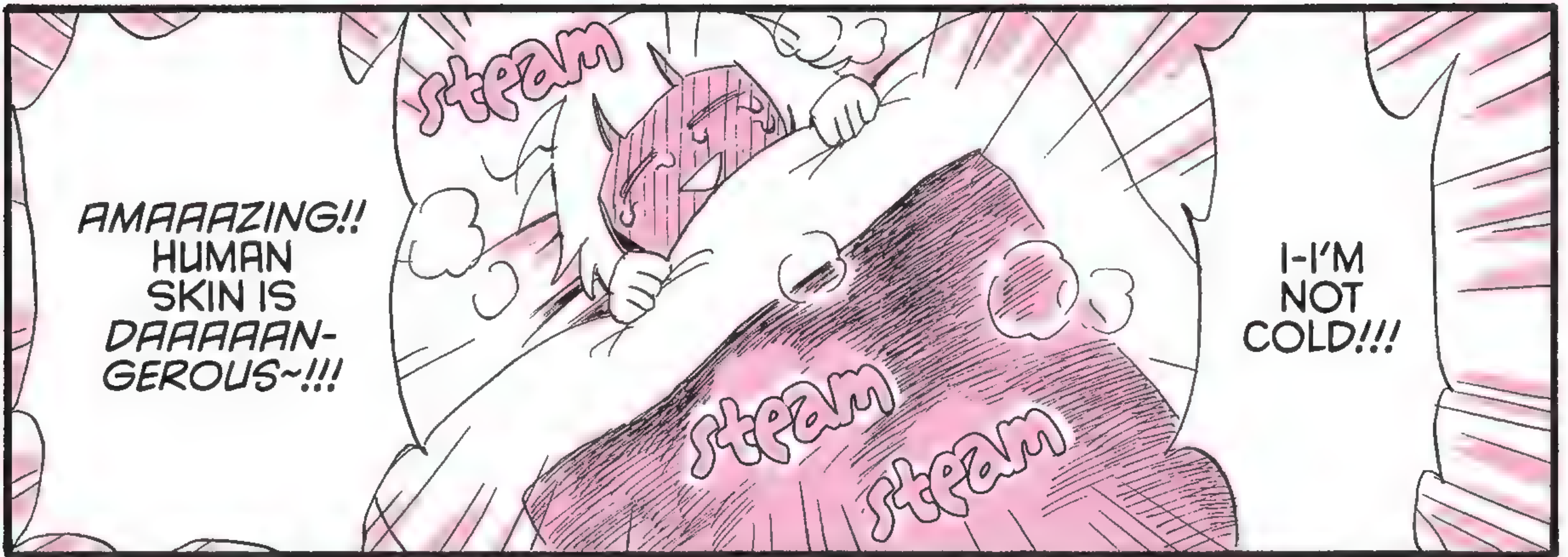
Which
made me
remember
this
experience.



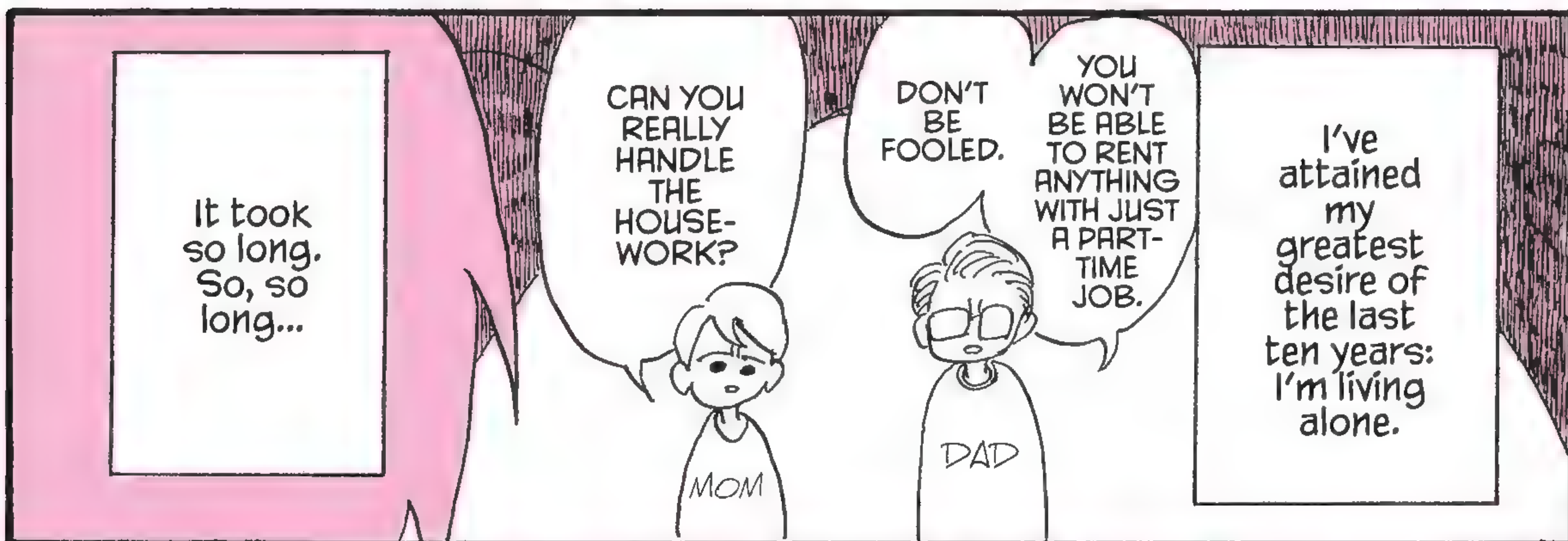
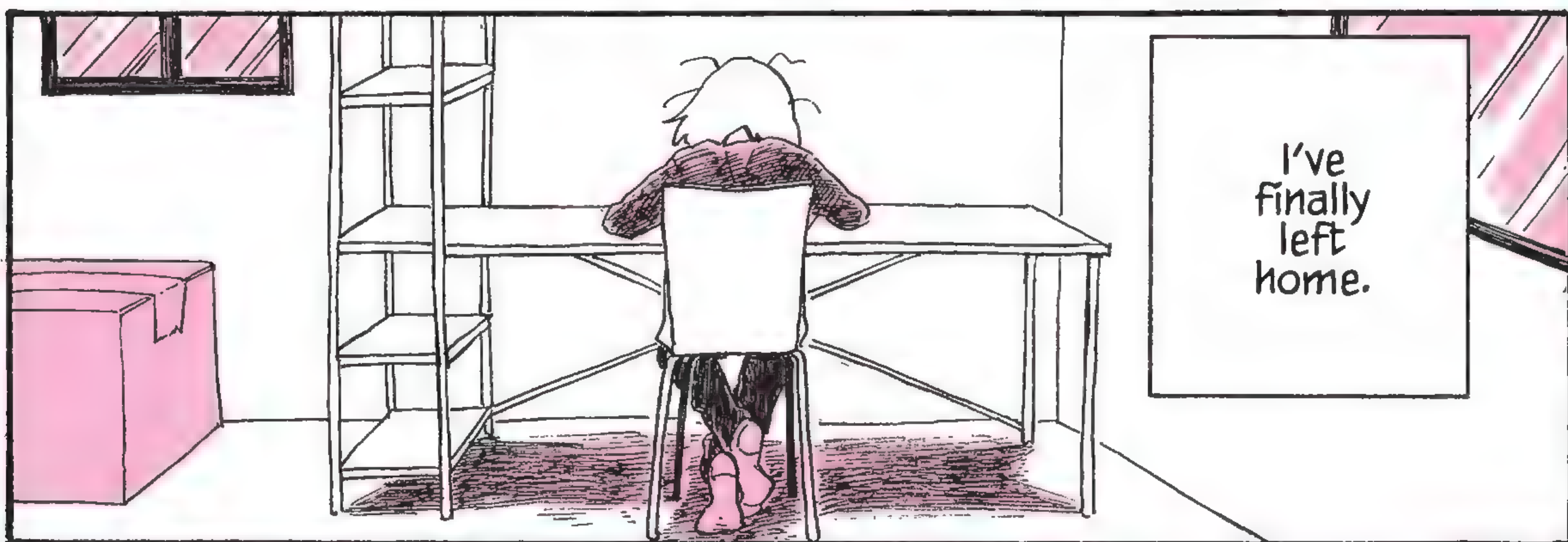
Later, I saw someone
on Twitter say,

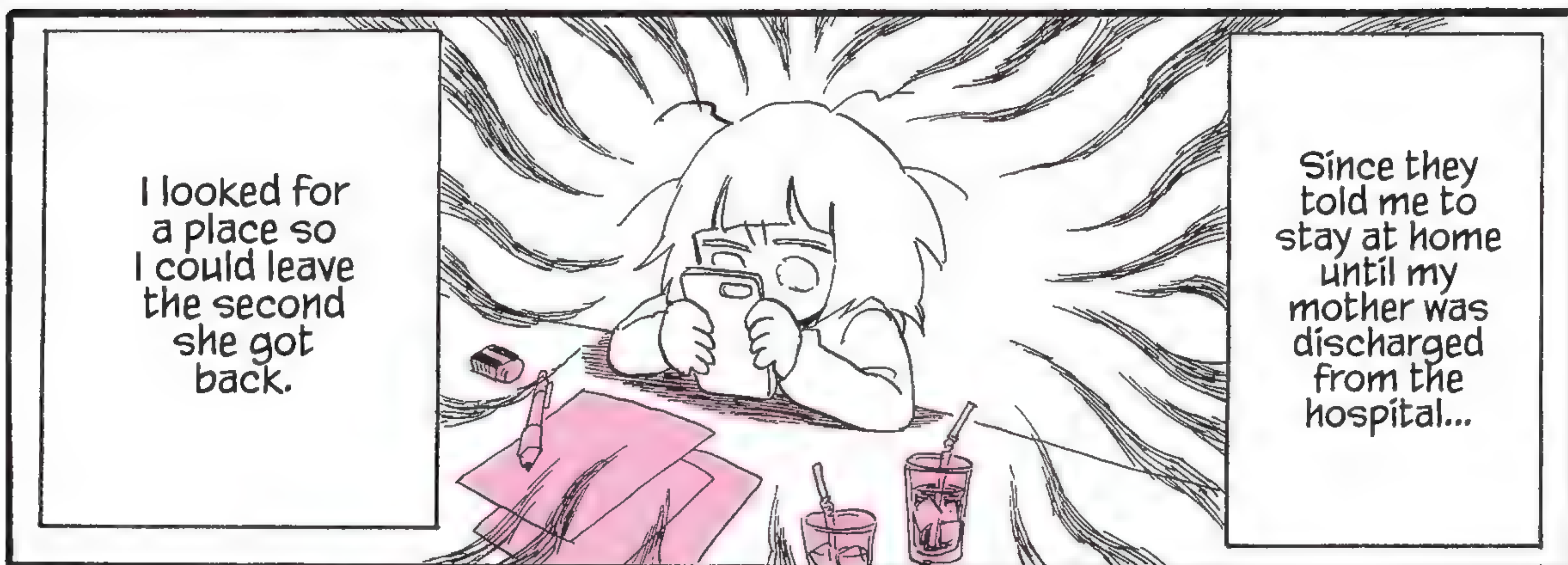
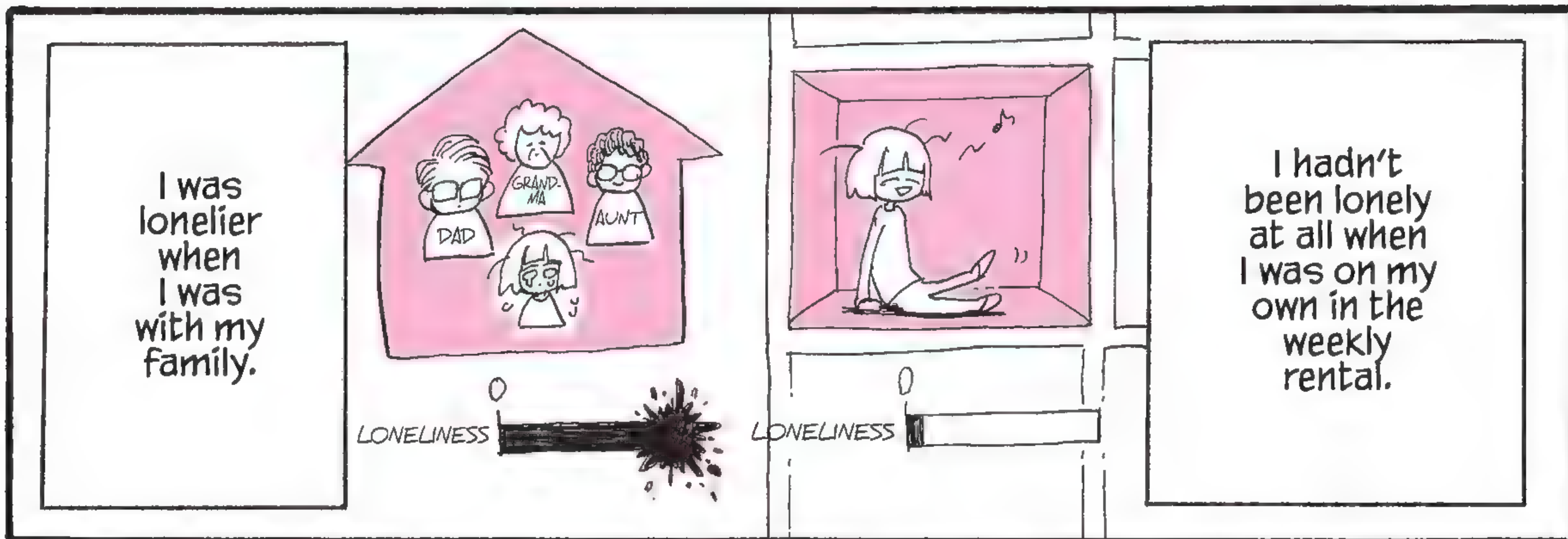
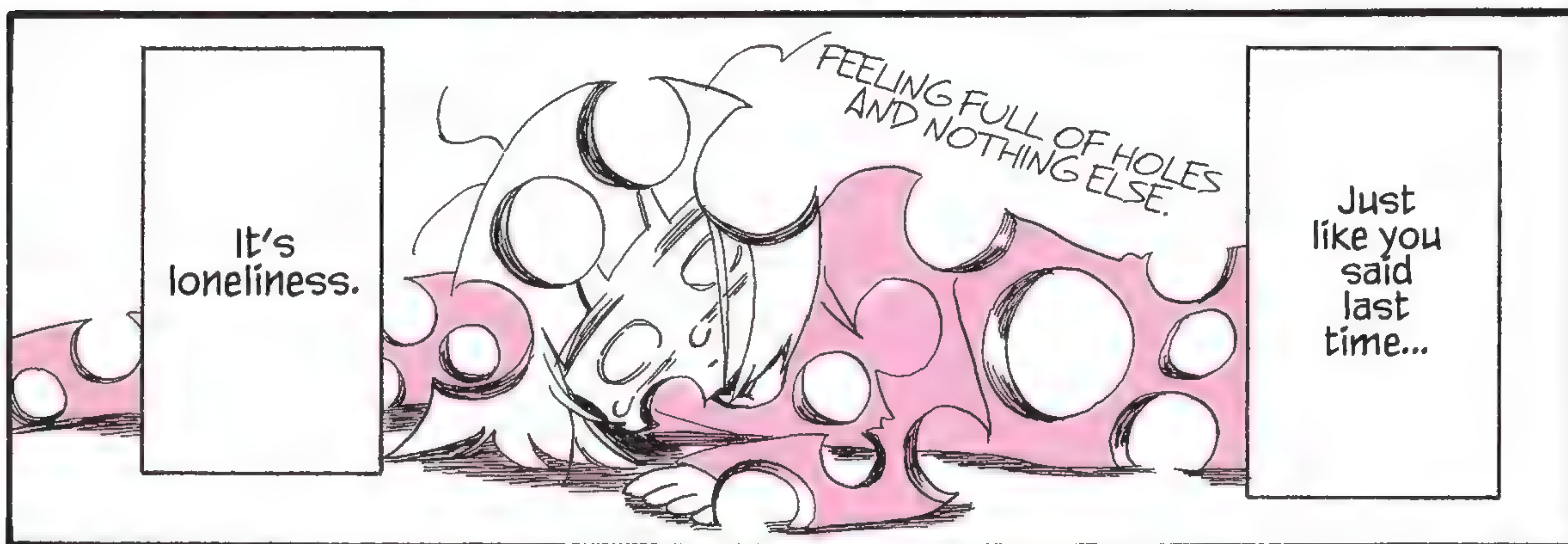
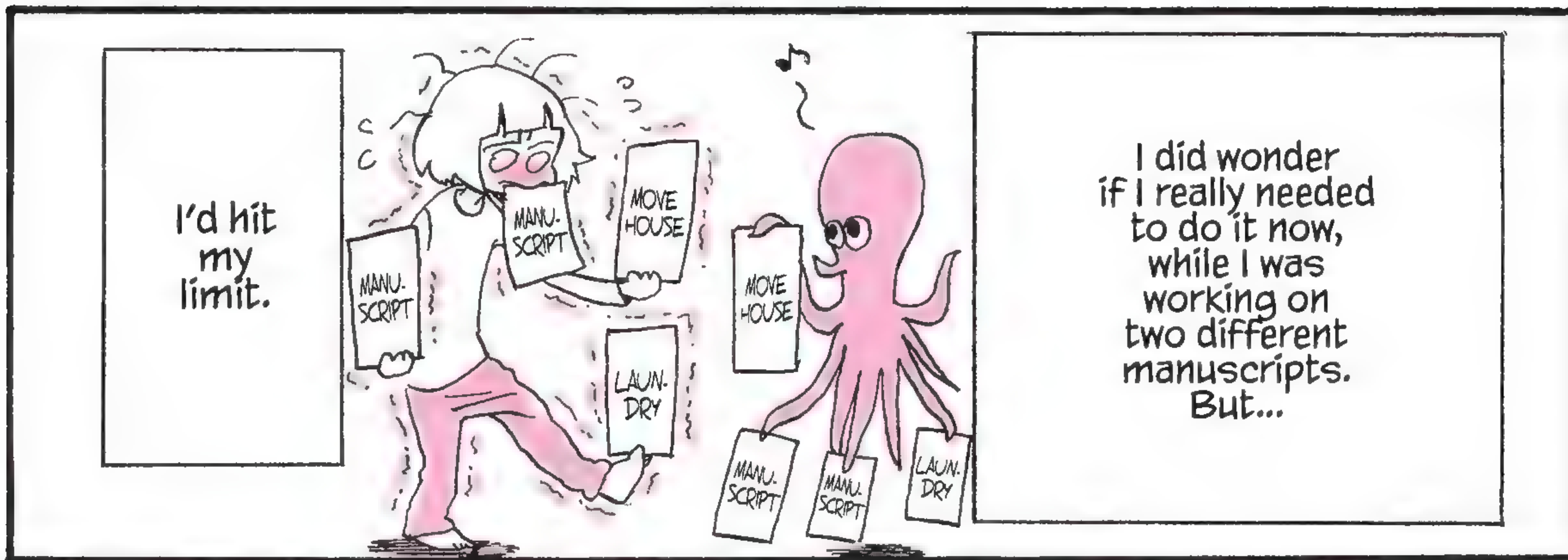
"Escort agencies are
an extreme. Lots of people
are satisfied with physical
contact, even without
the orgasm."

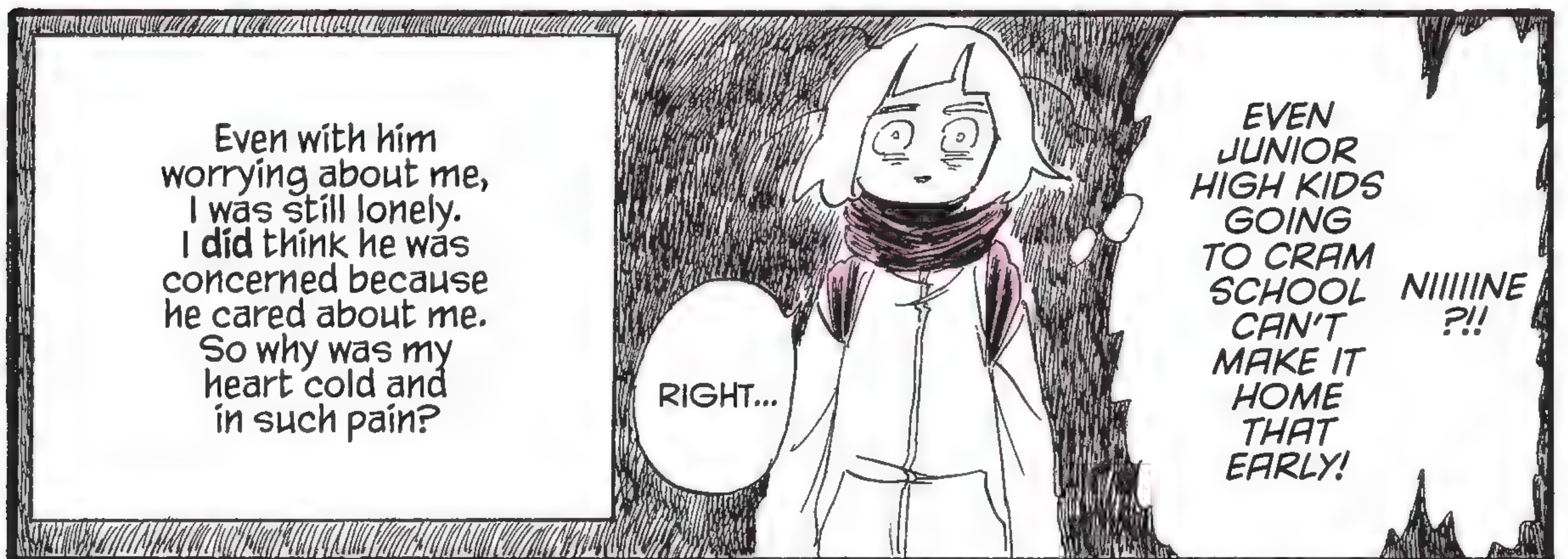
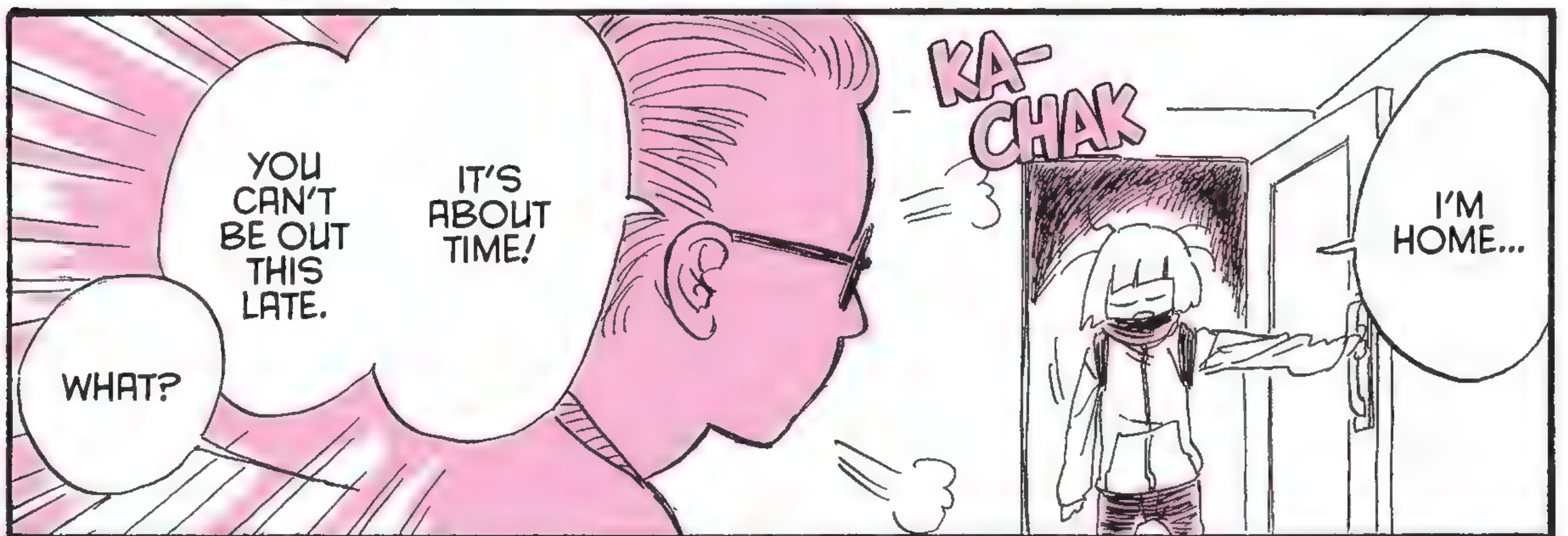


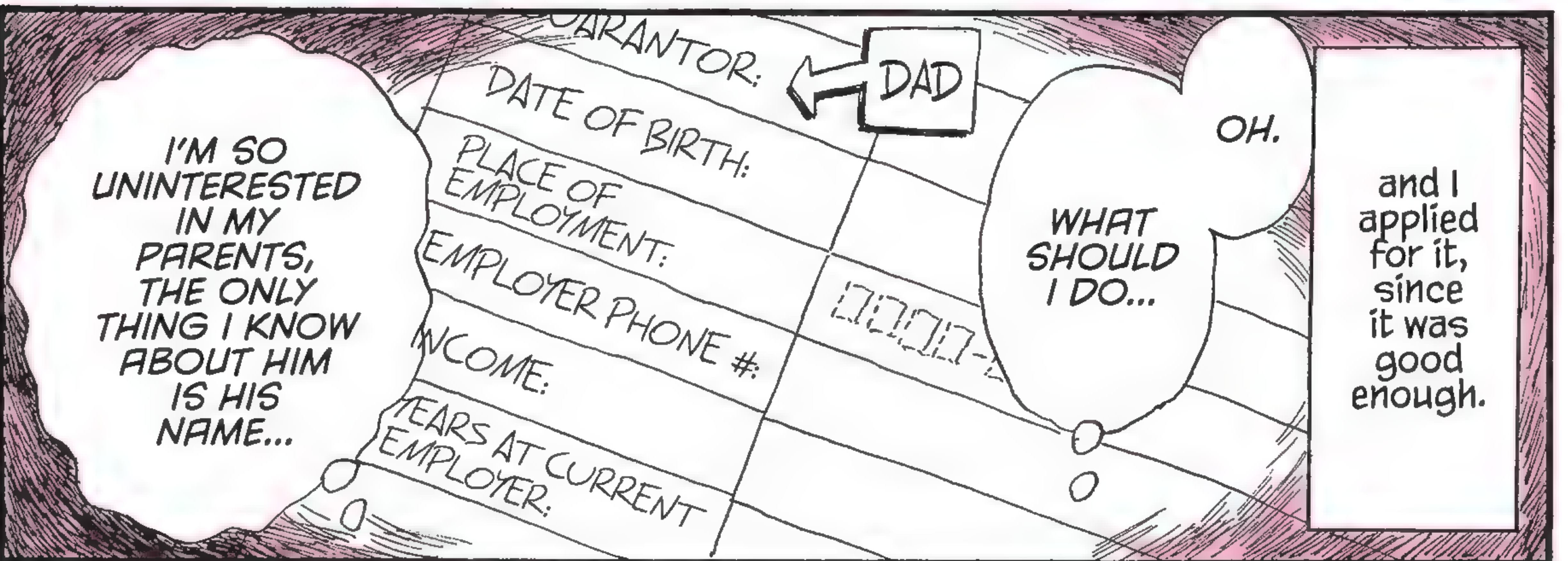
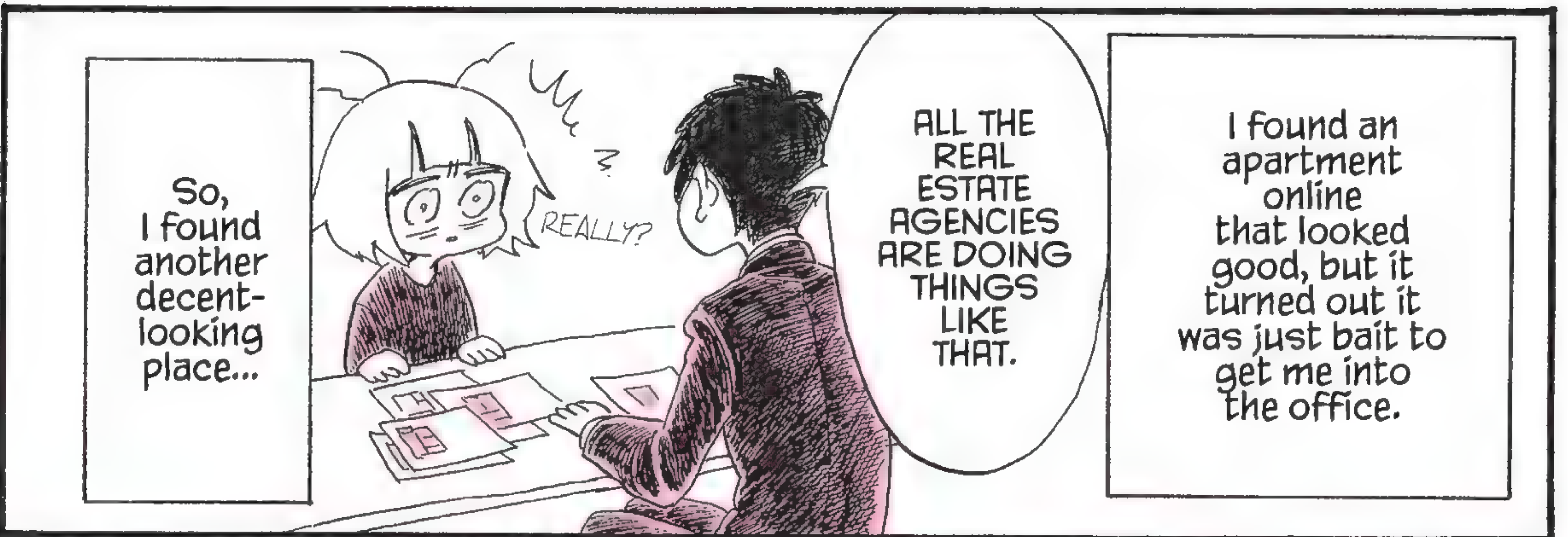
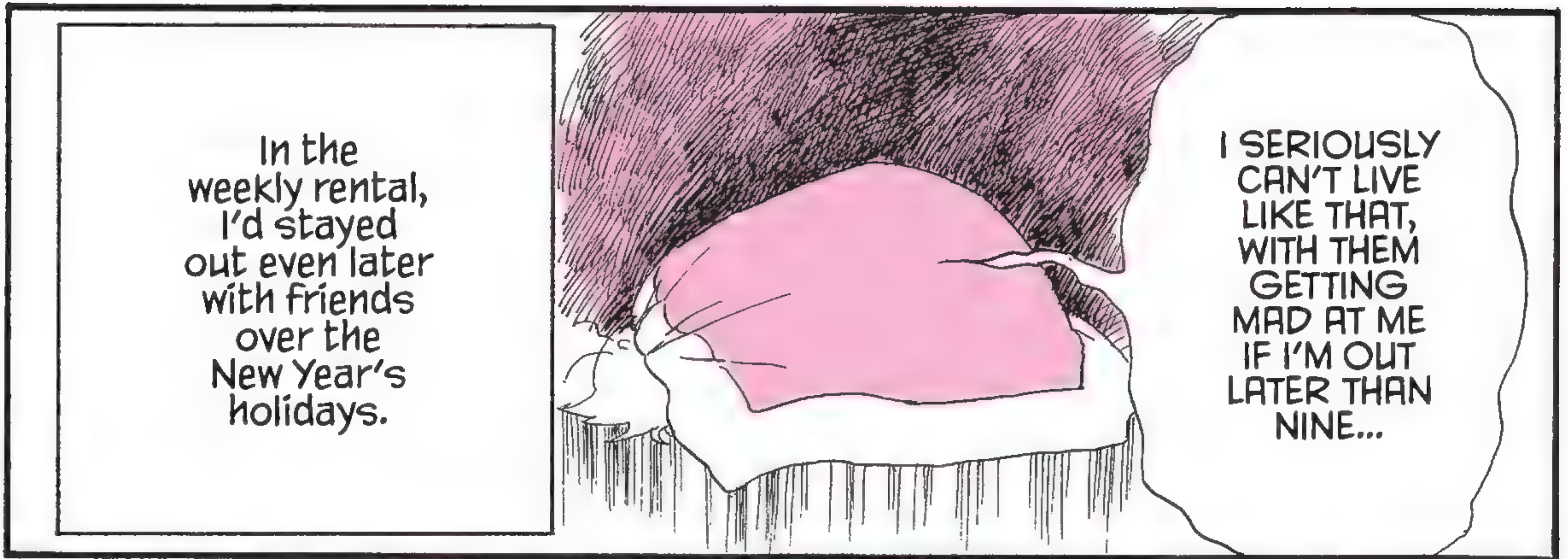


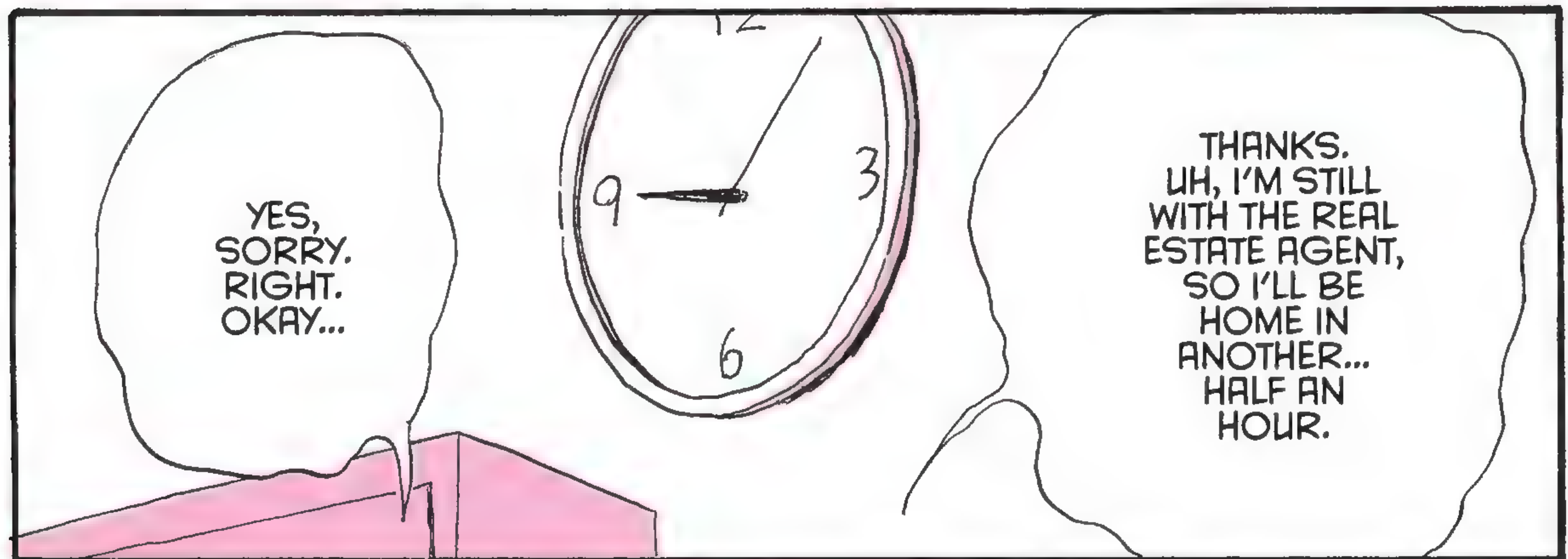
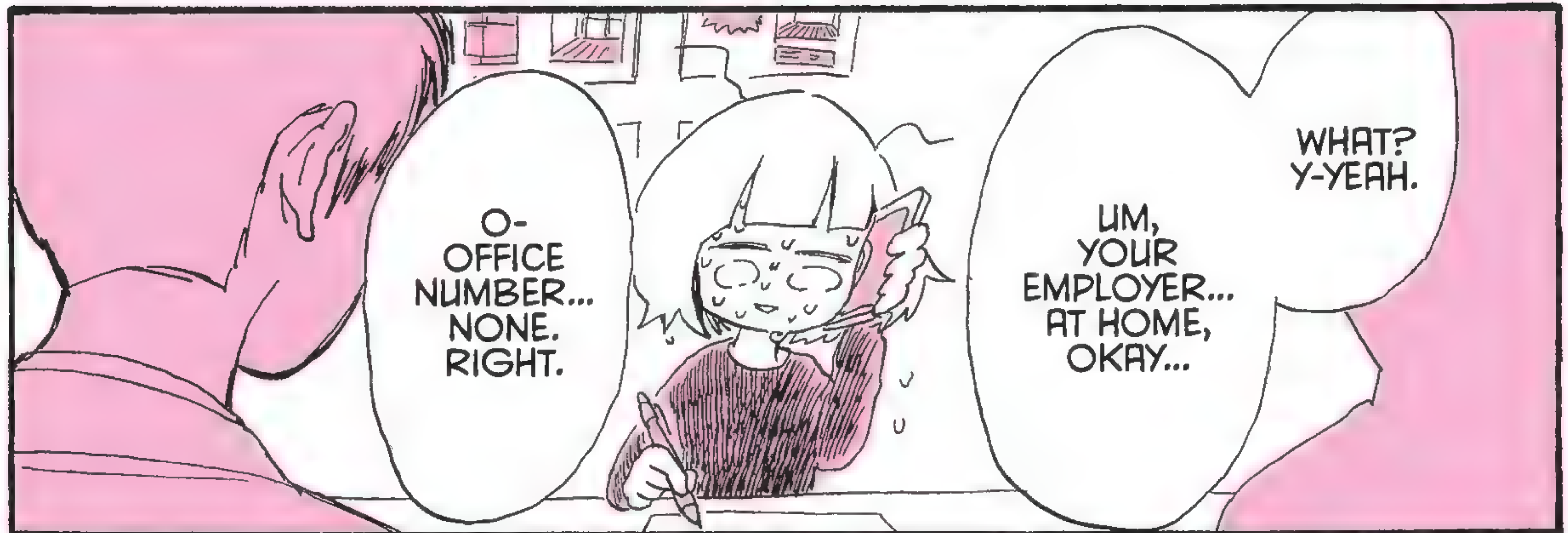
My
Solo
Exchange
Diary

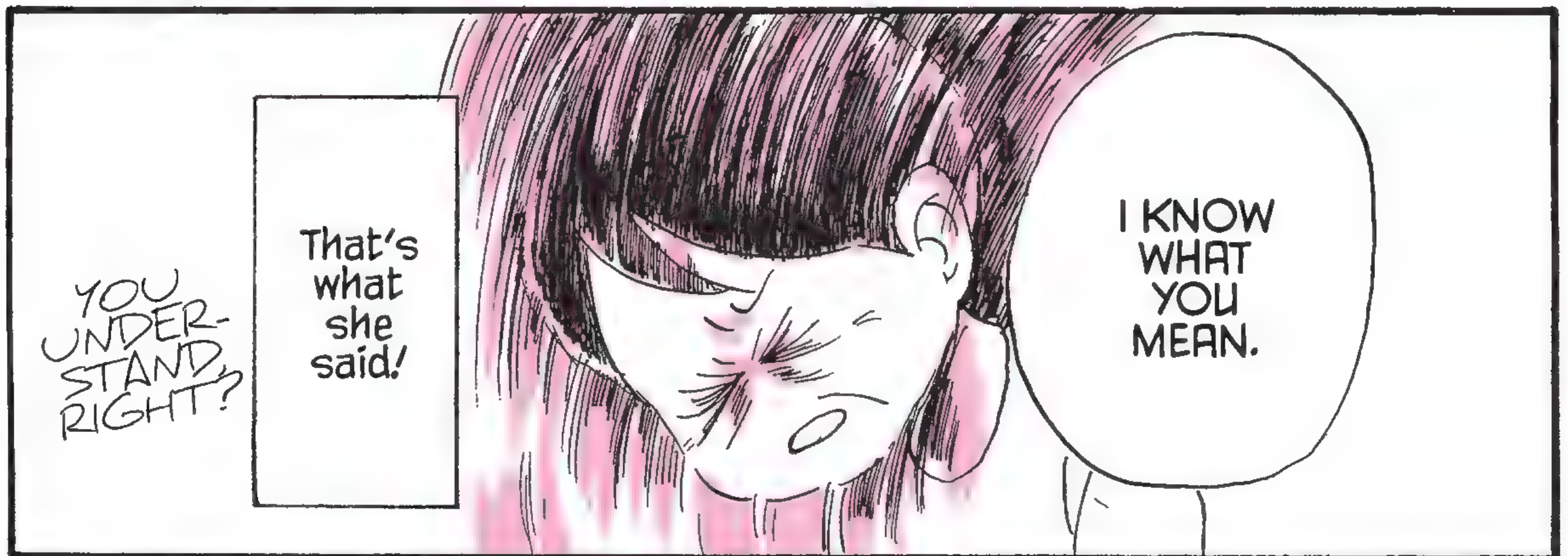
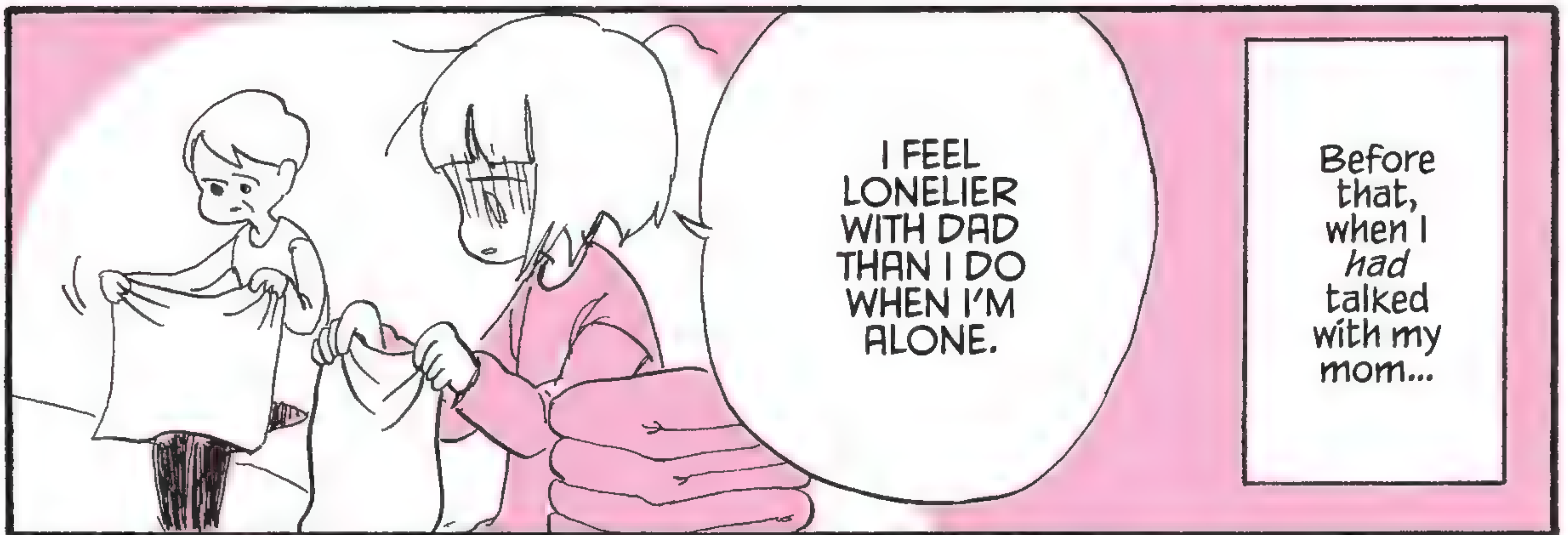
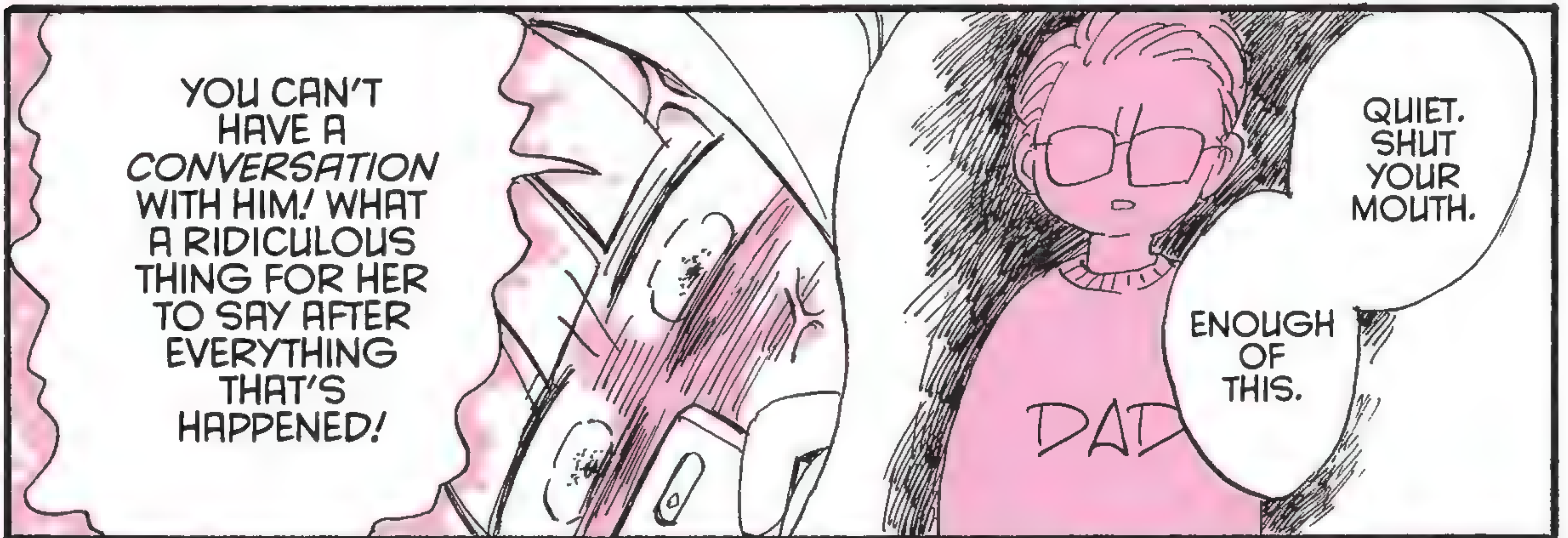
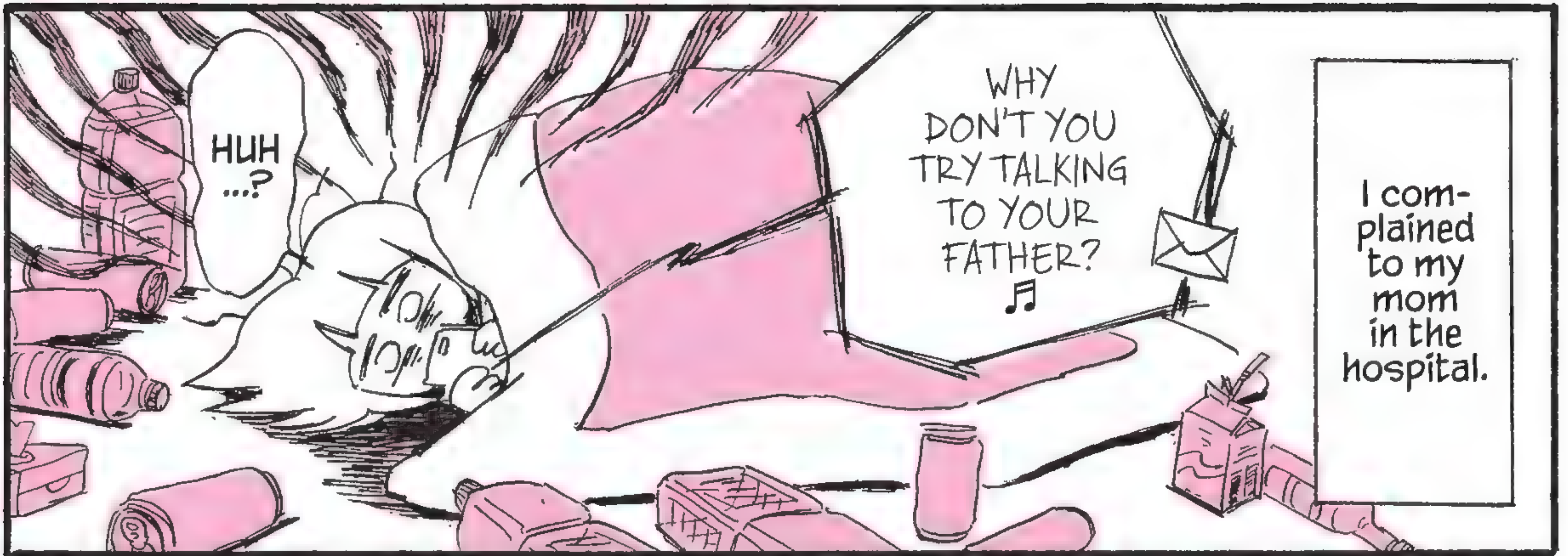


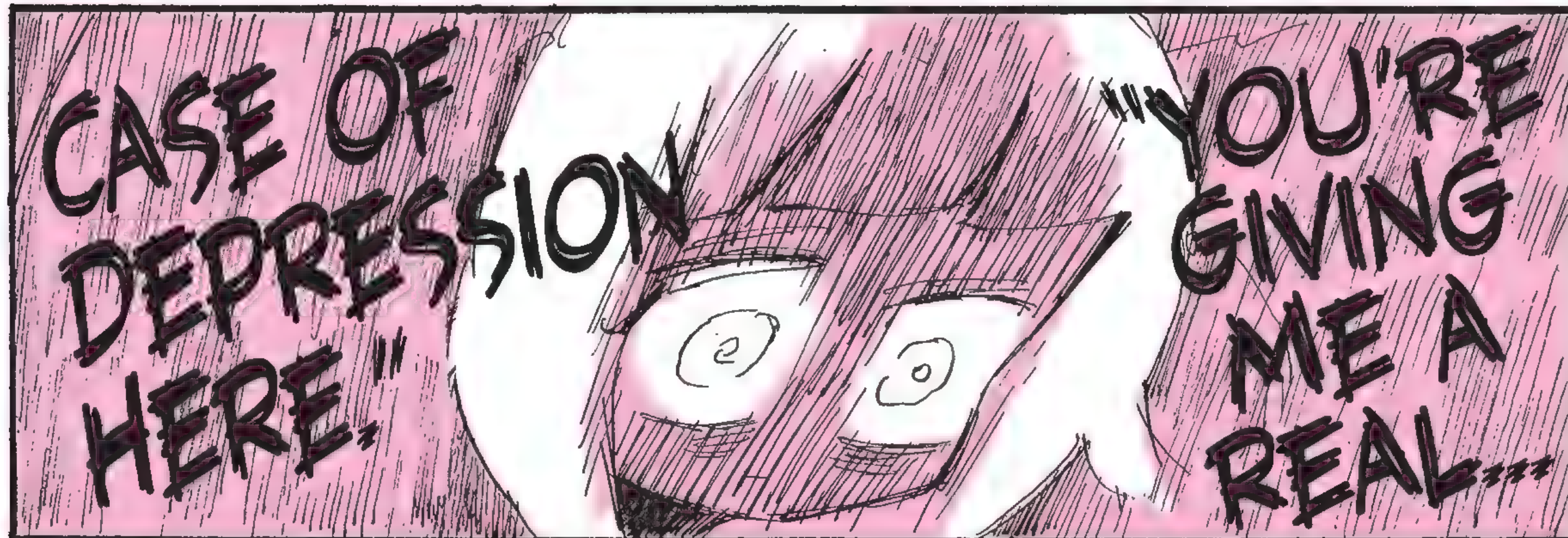
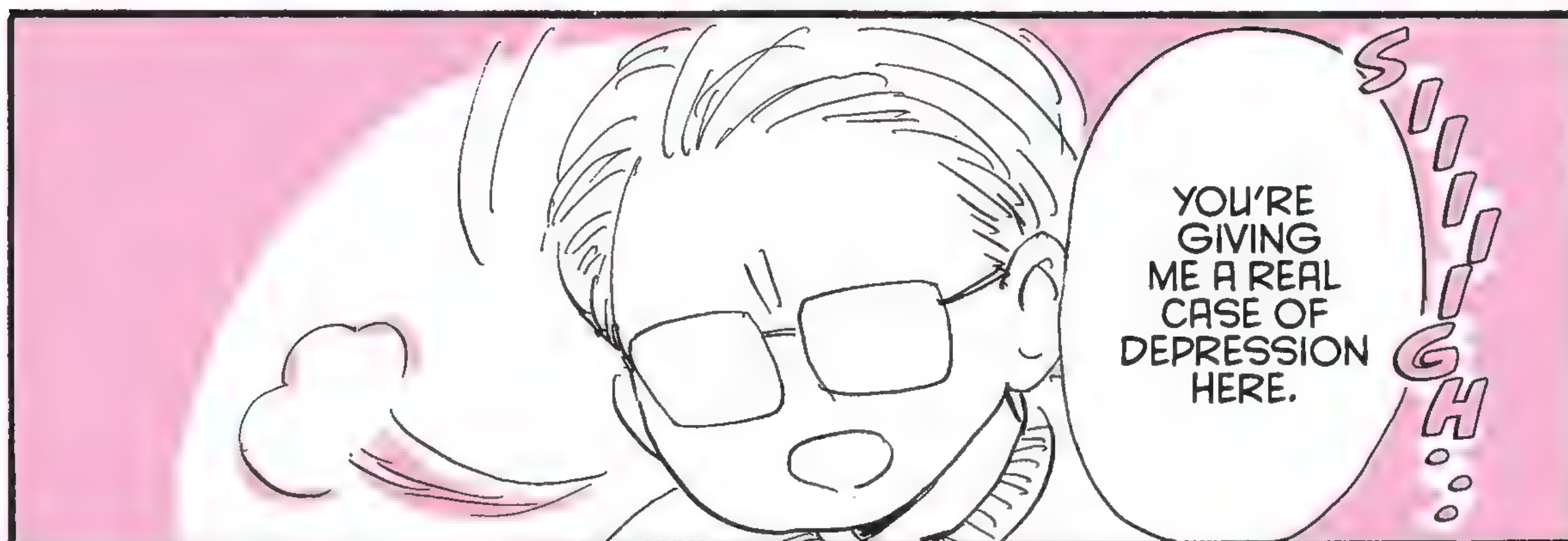
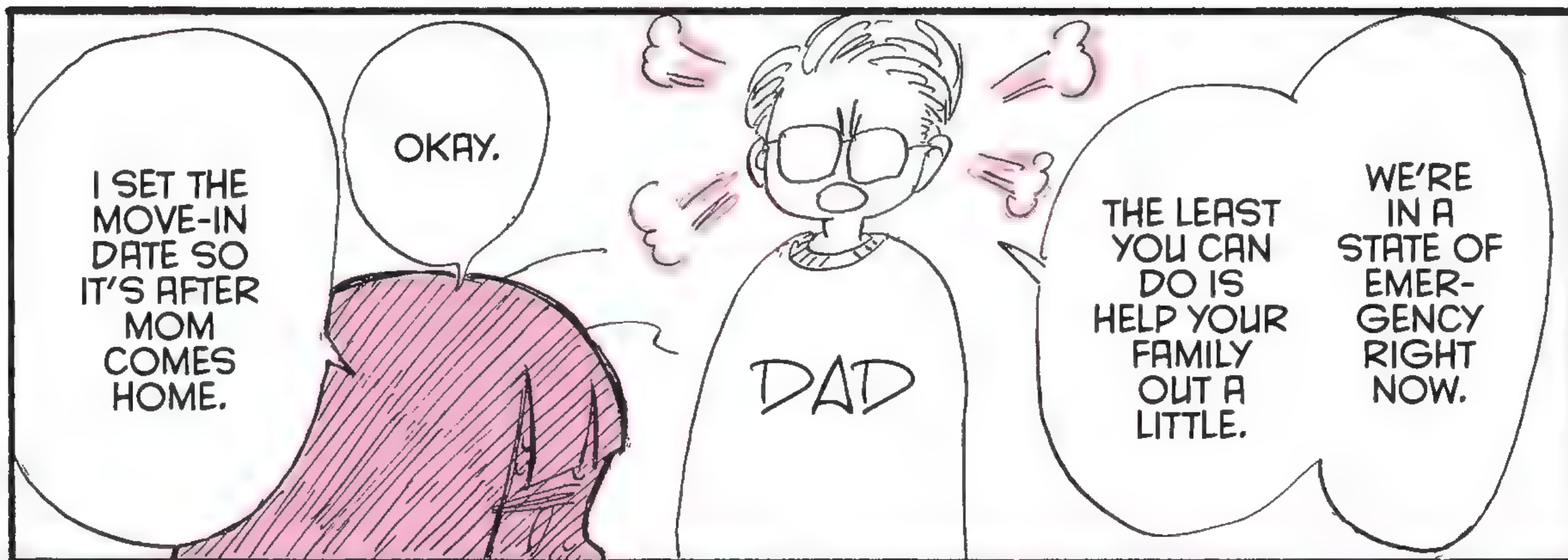








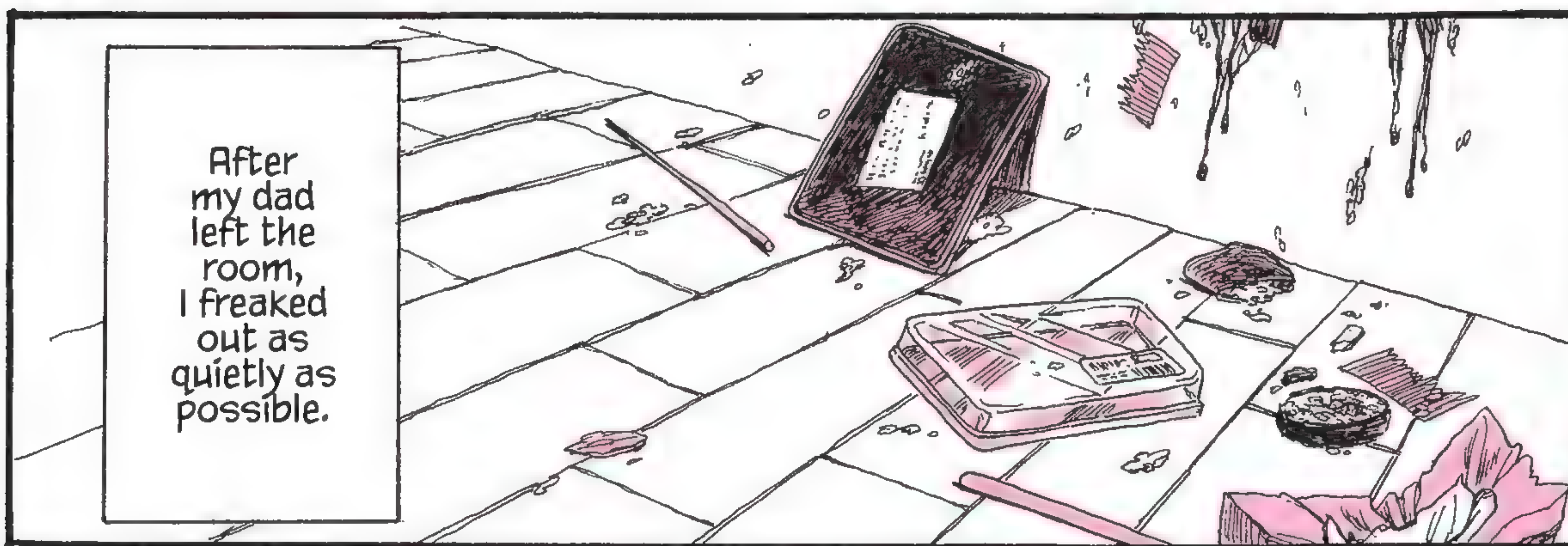




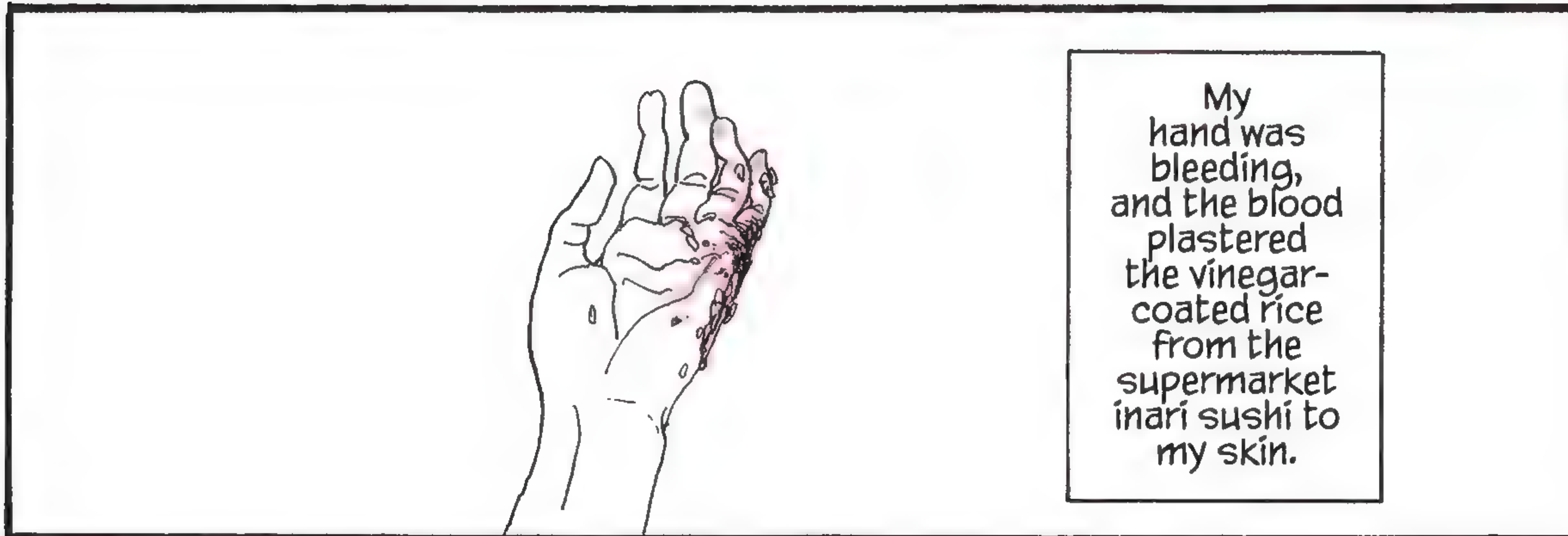


I'd suffered through that.

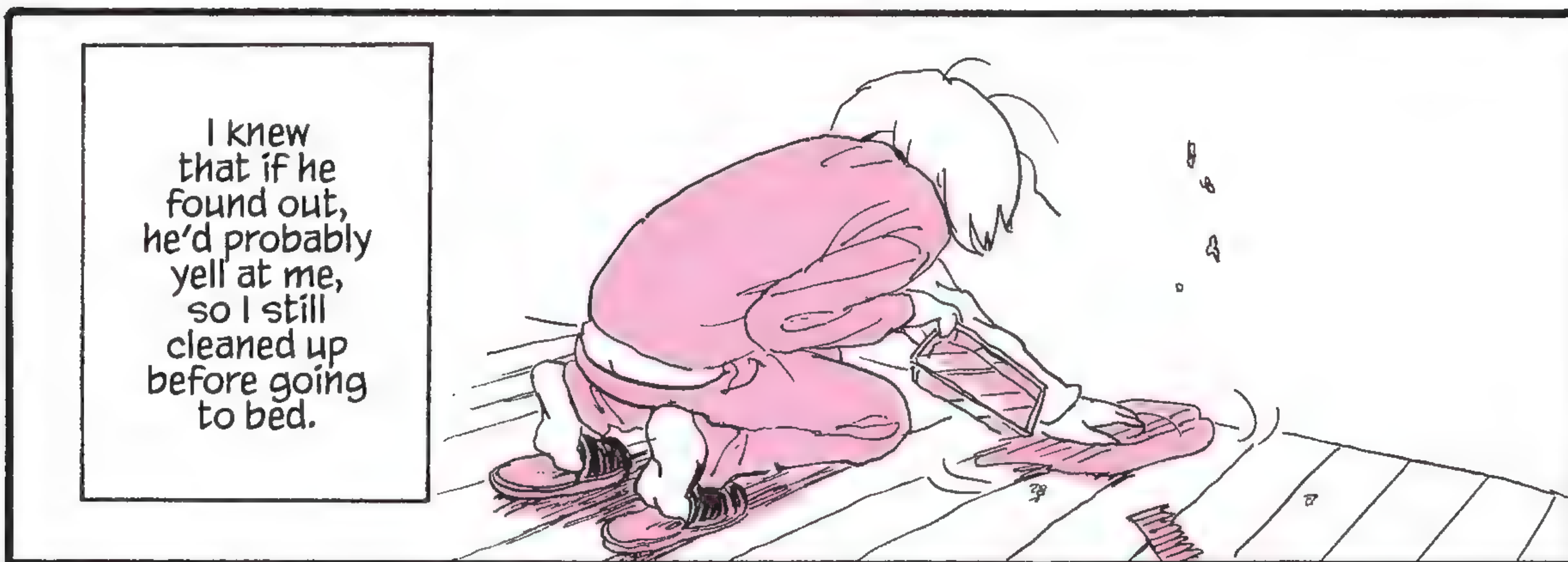
I'd been depressed for a decade.



After my dad left the room, I freaked out as quietly as possible.

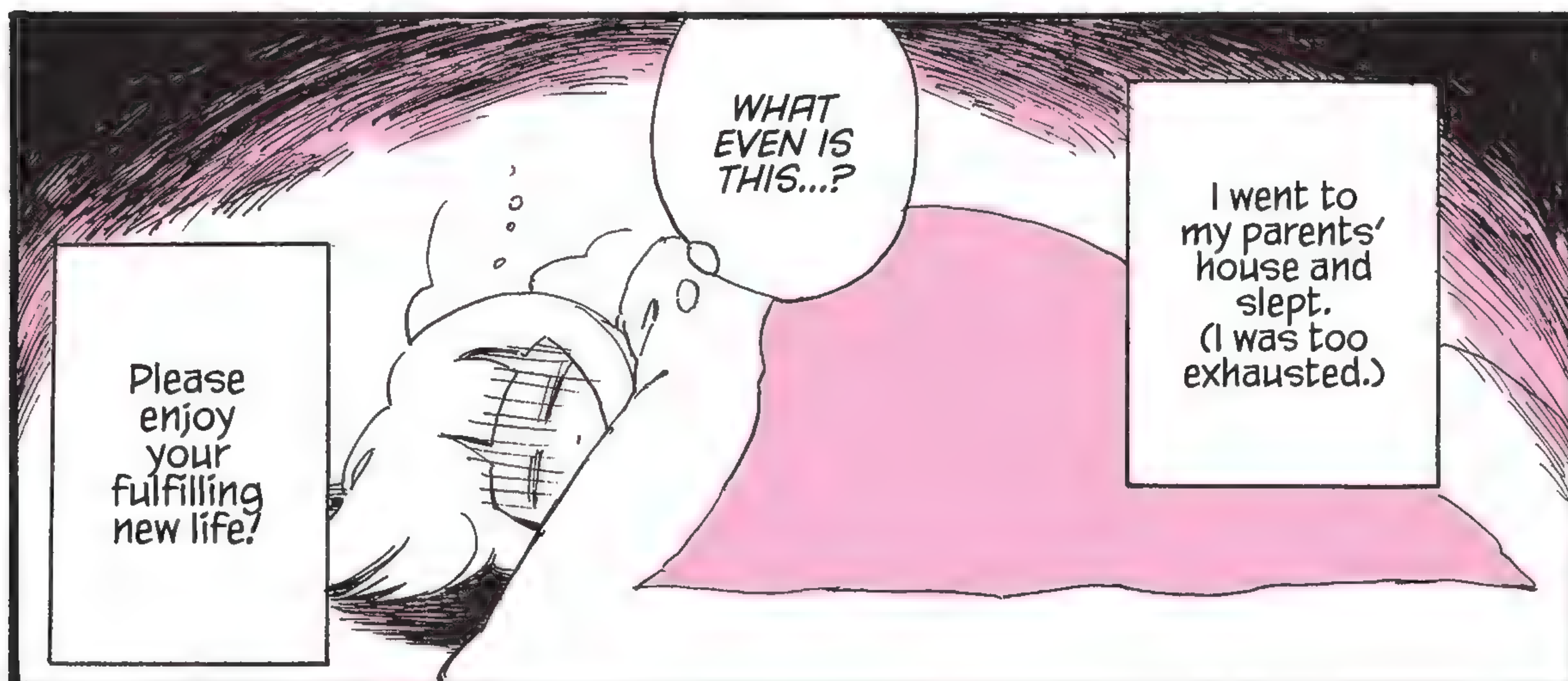
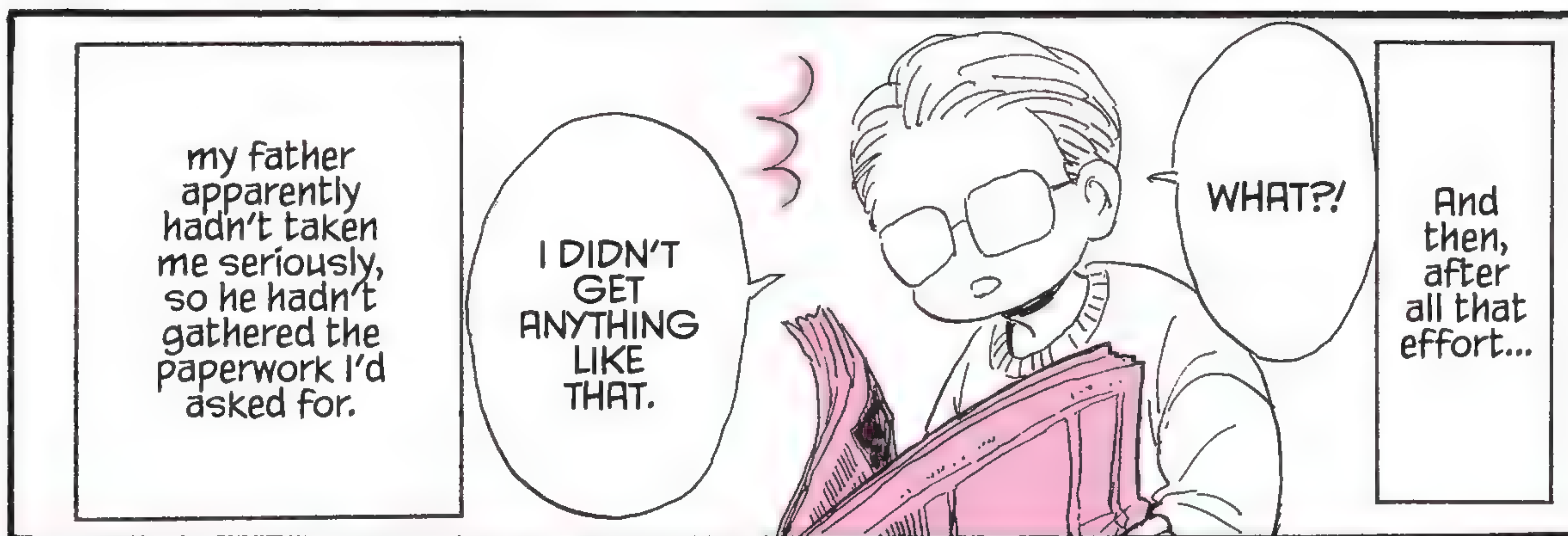


My hand was bleeding, and the blood plastered the vinegar-coated rice from the supermarket inari sushi to my skin.

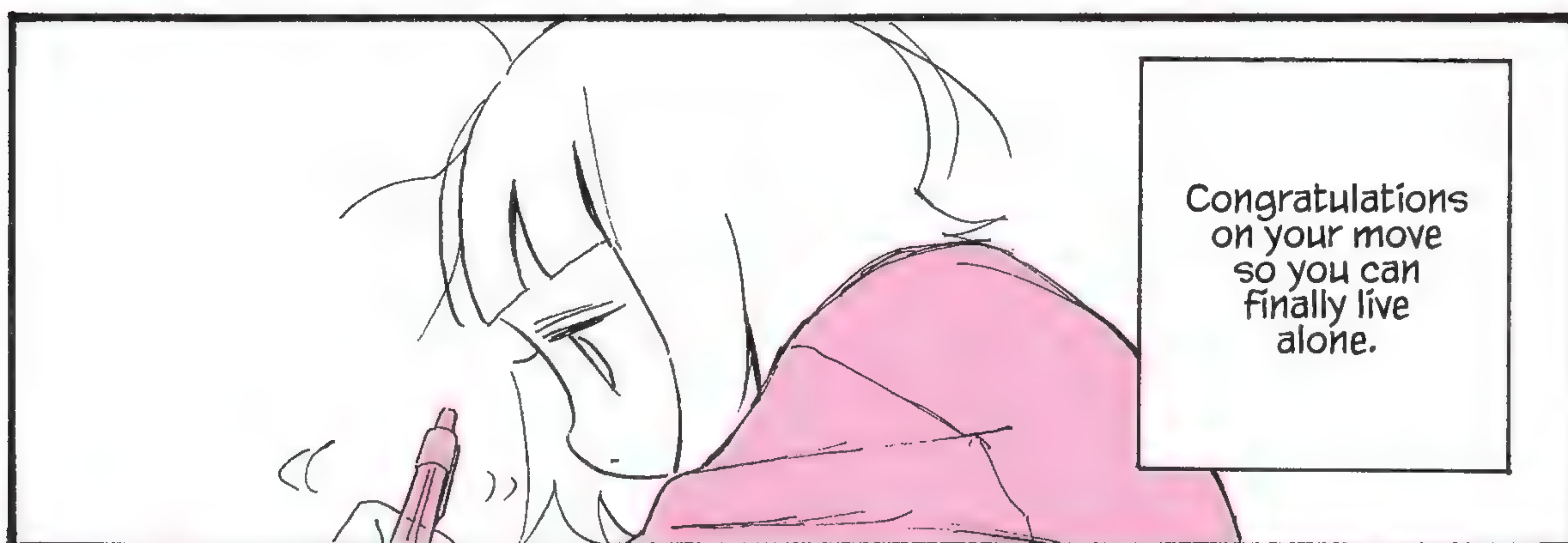
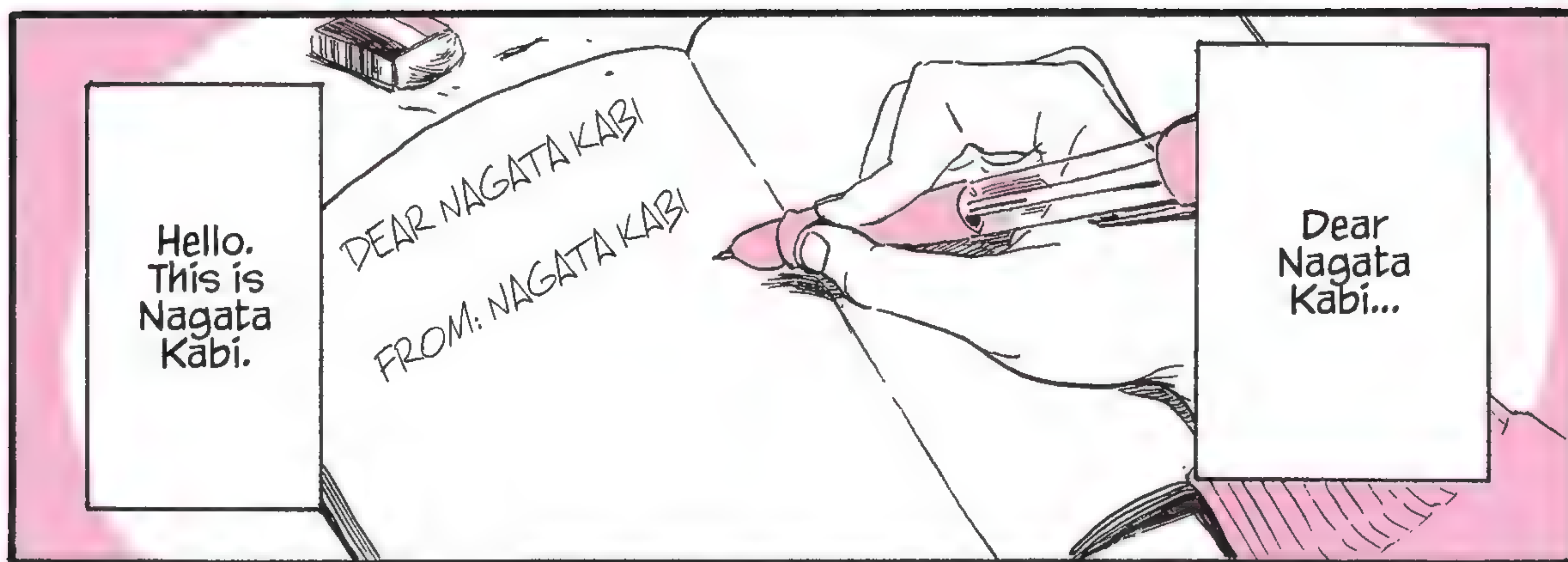


I knew that if he found out, he'd probably yell at me, so I still cleaned up before going to bed.





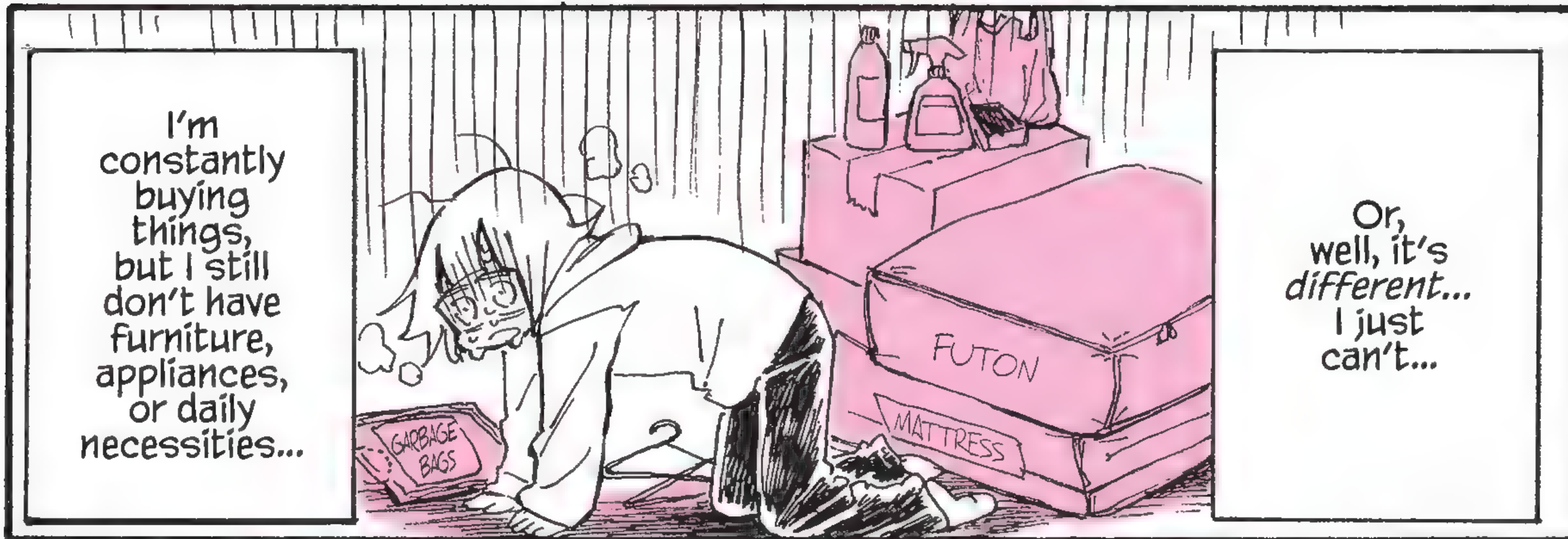
My
Solo
Exchange
Diary





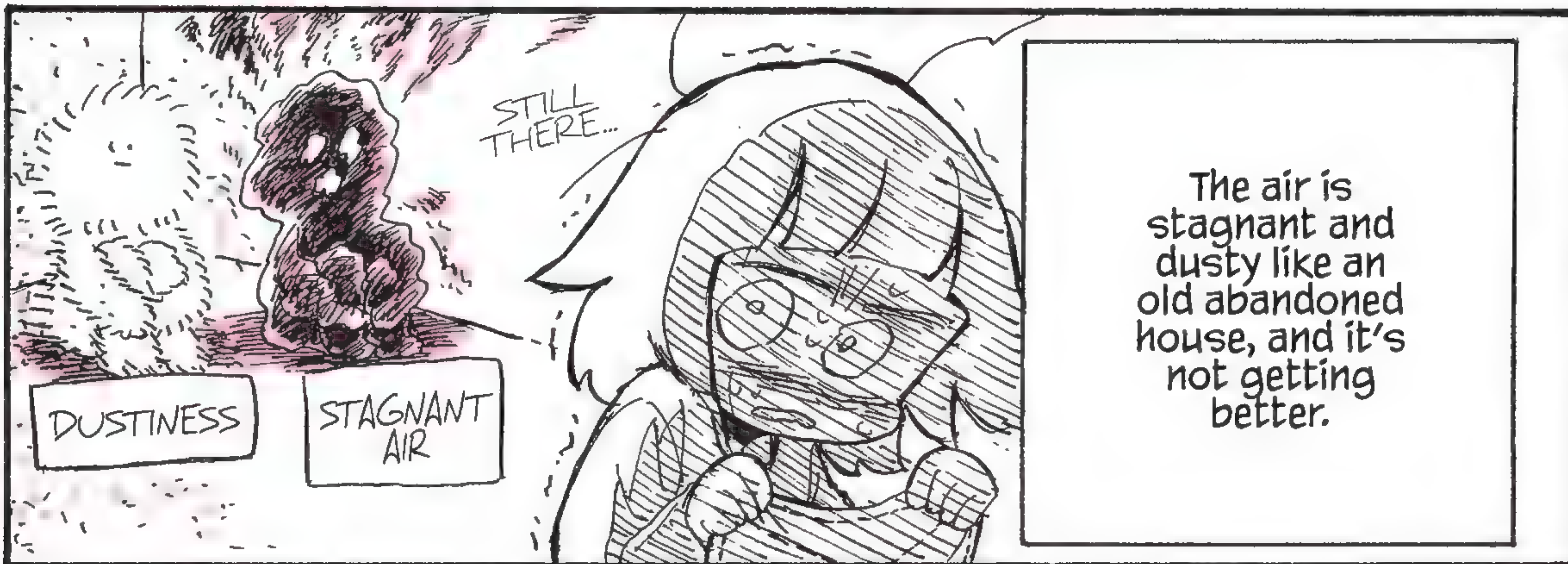
you
can't
live in
your
new
place!

This is
really
hard
to say,
but...



I'm
constantly
buying
things,
but I still
don't have
furniture,
appliances,
or daily
necessities...

Or,
well, it's
different...
I just
can't...

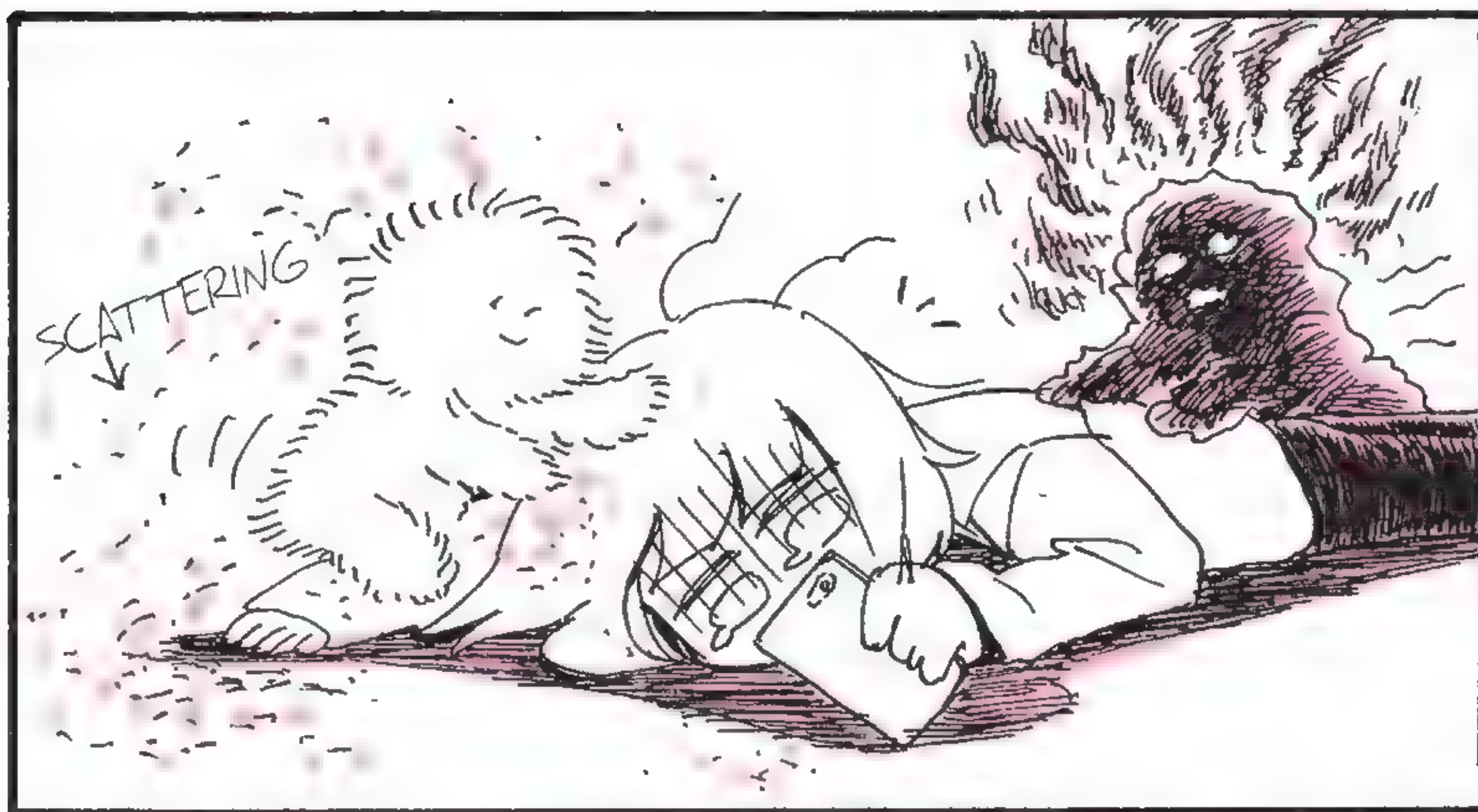


DUSTINESS

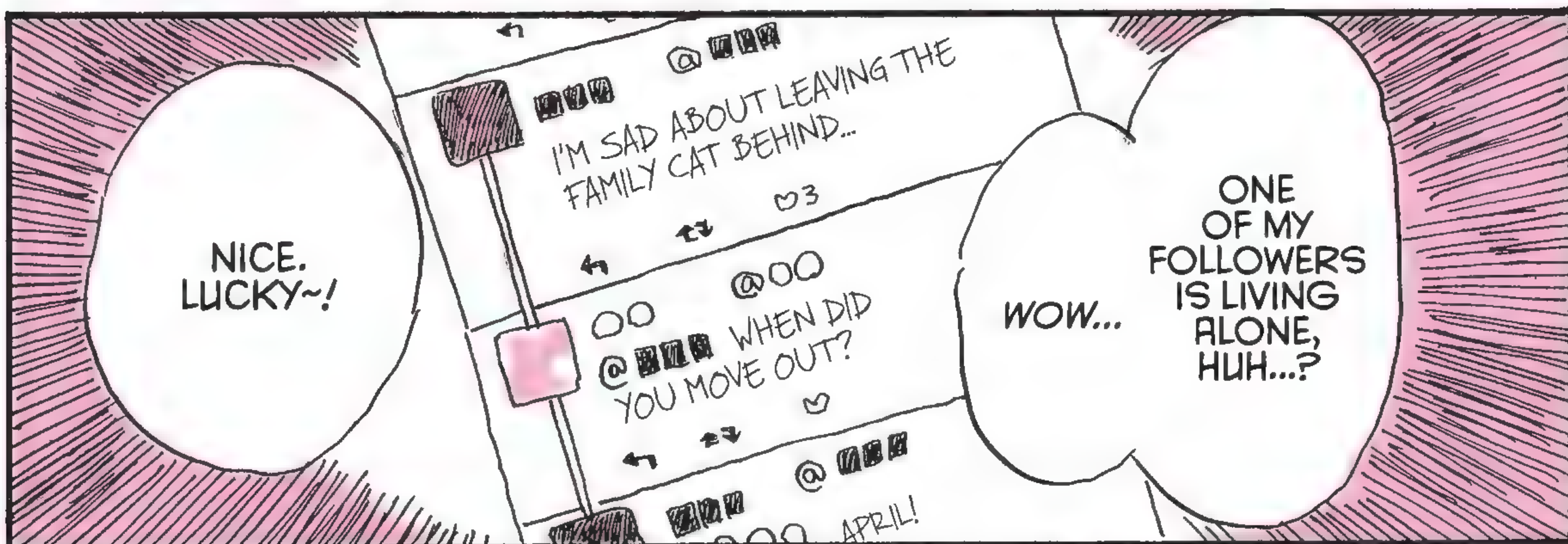
STAGNANT
AIR

STILL
THERE...

The air is
stagnant and
dusty like an
old abandoned
house, and it's
not getting
better.



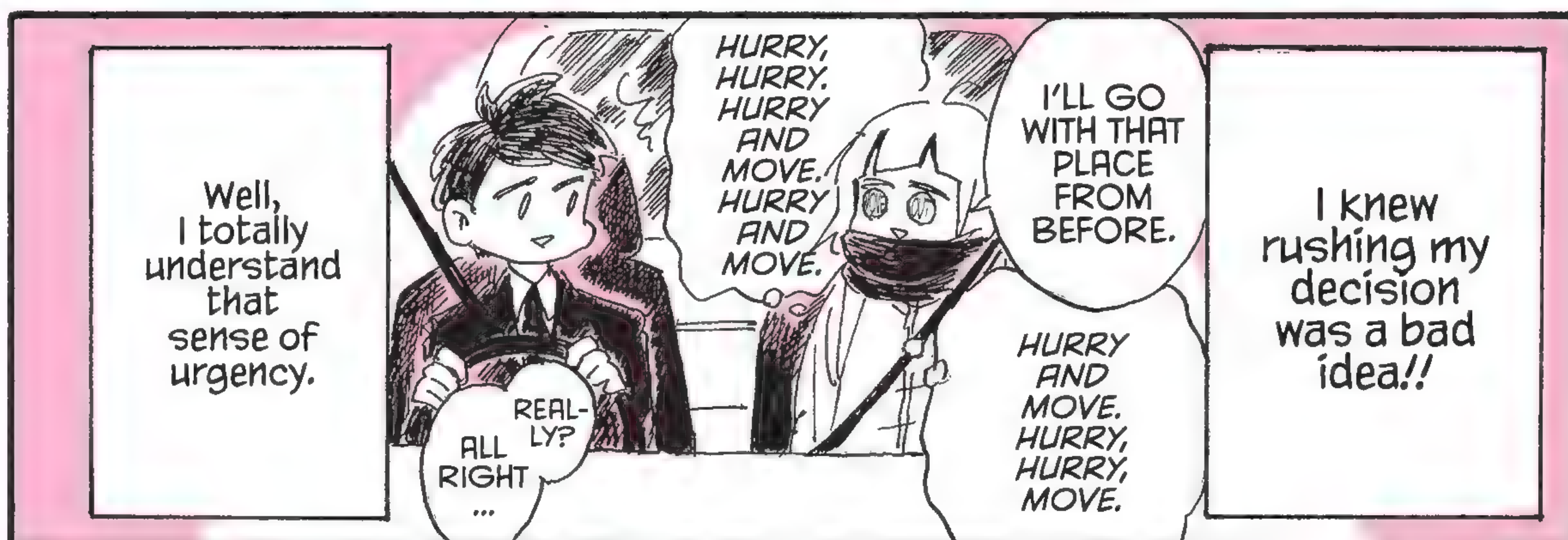
I couldn't
turn it into
something
livable in my
spare time
between
manuscripts.

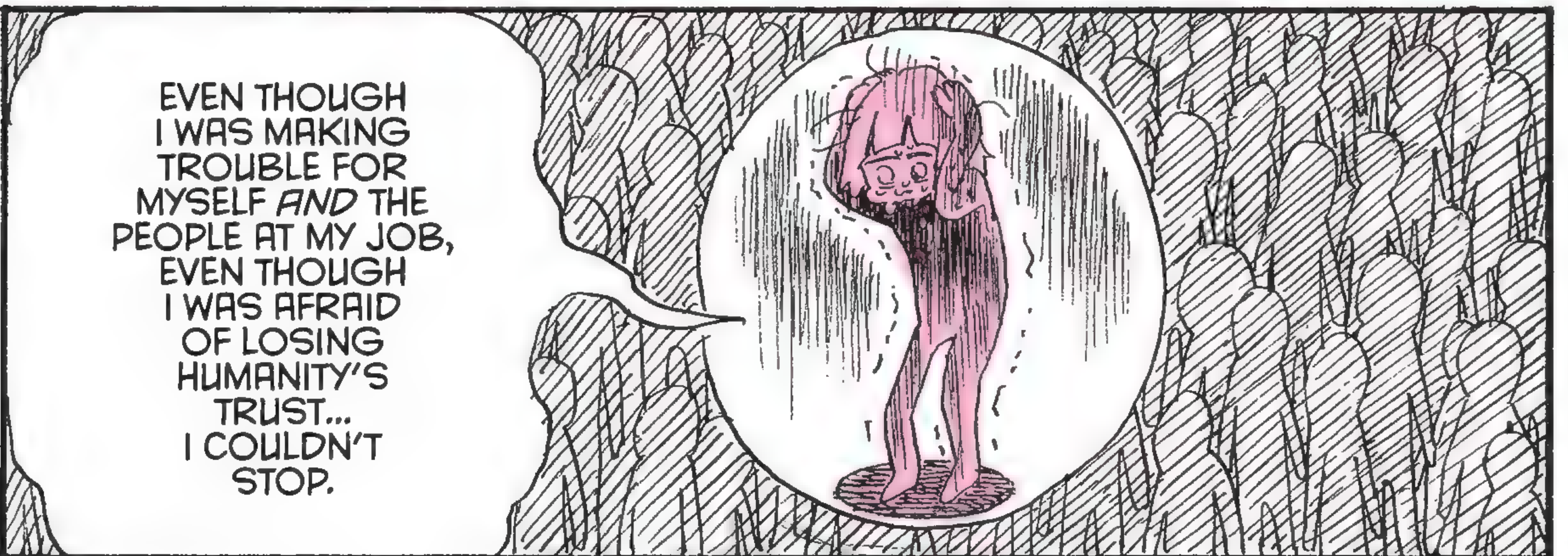
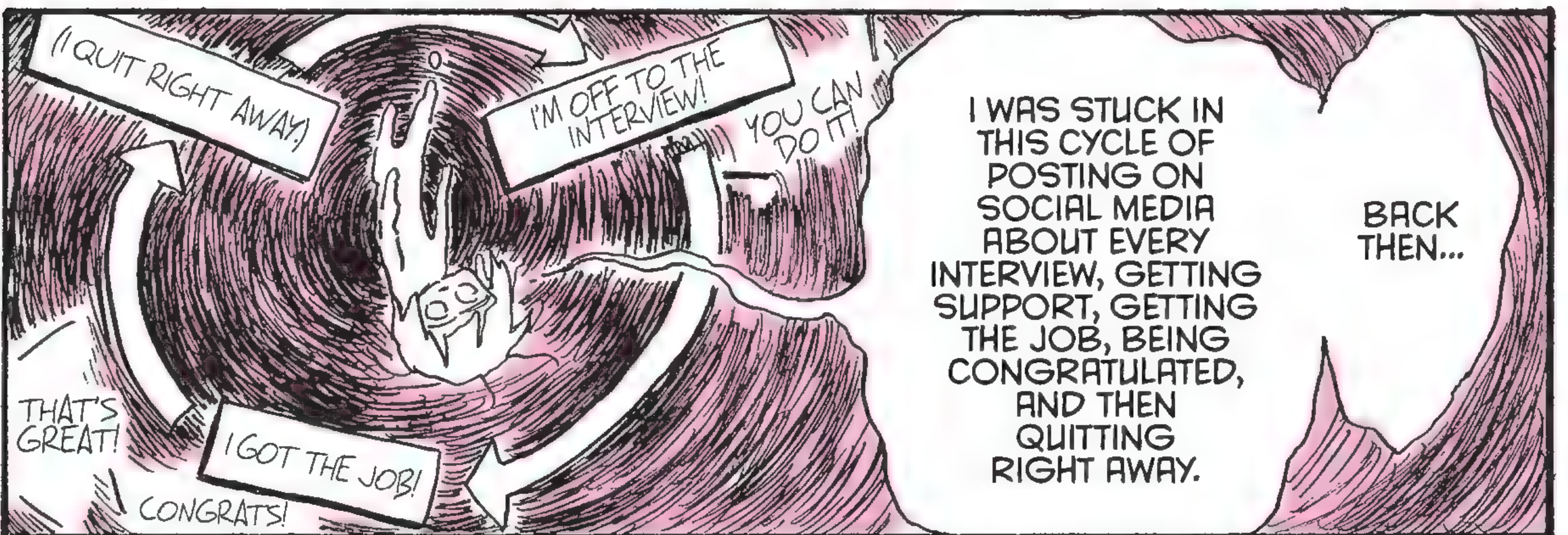
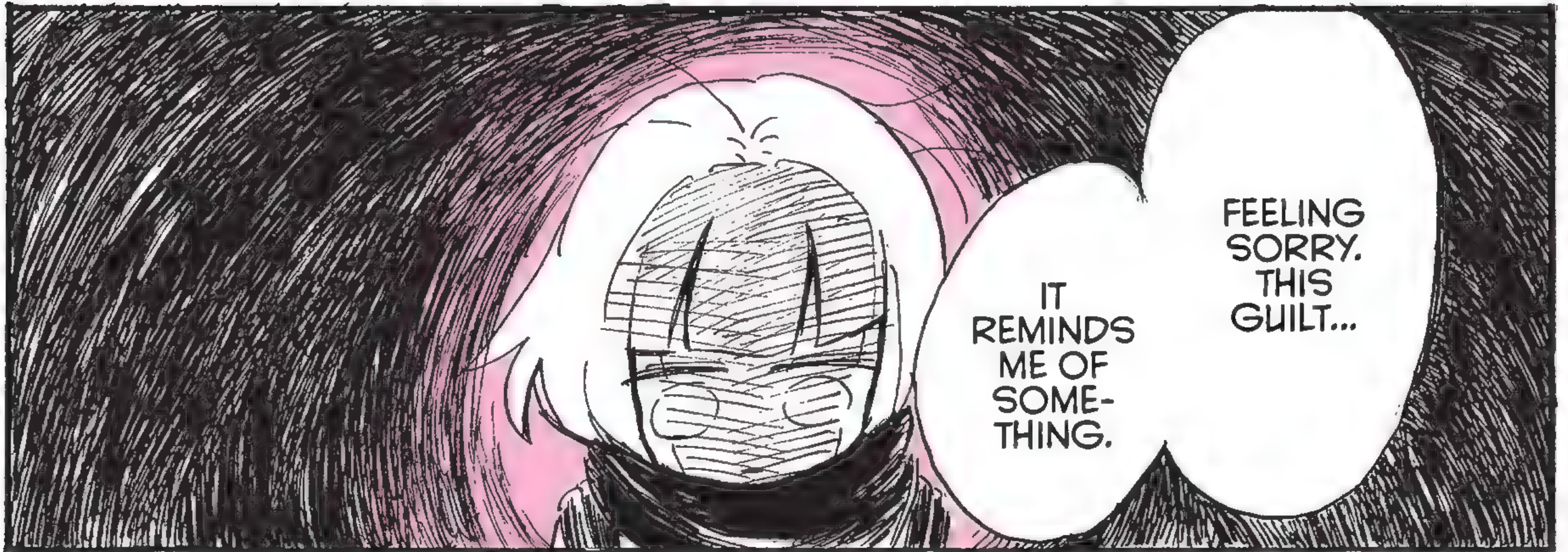


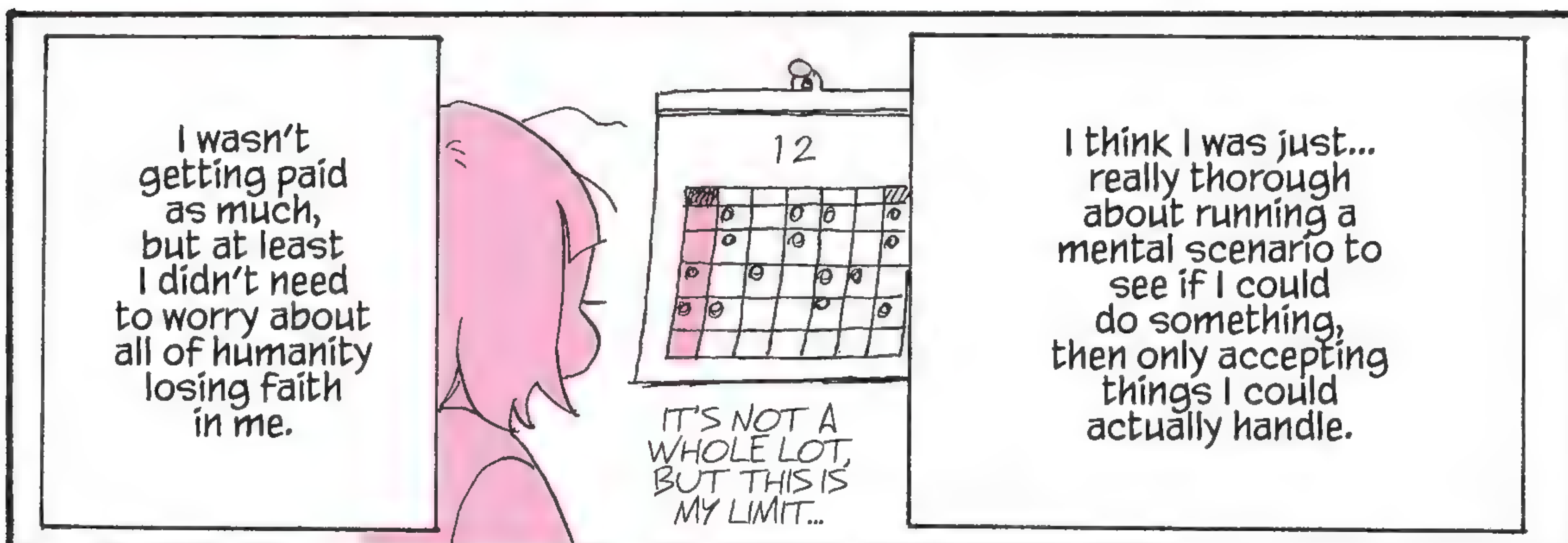
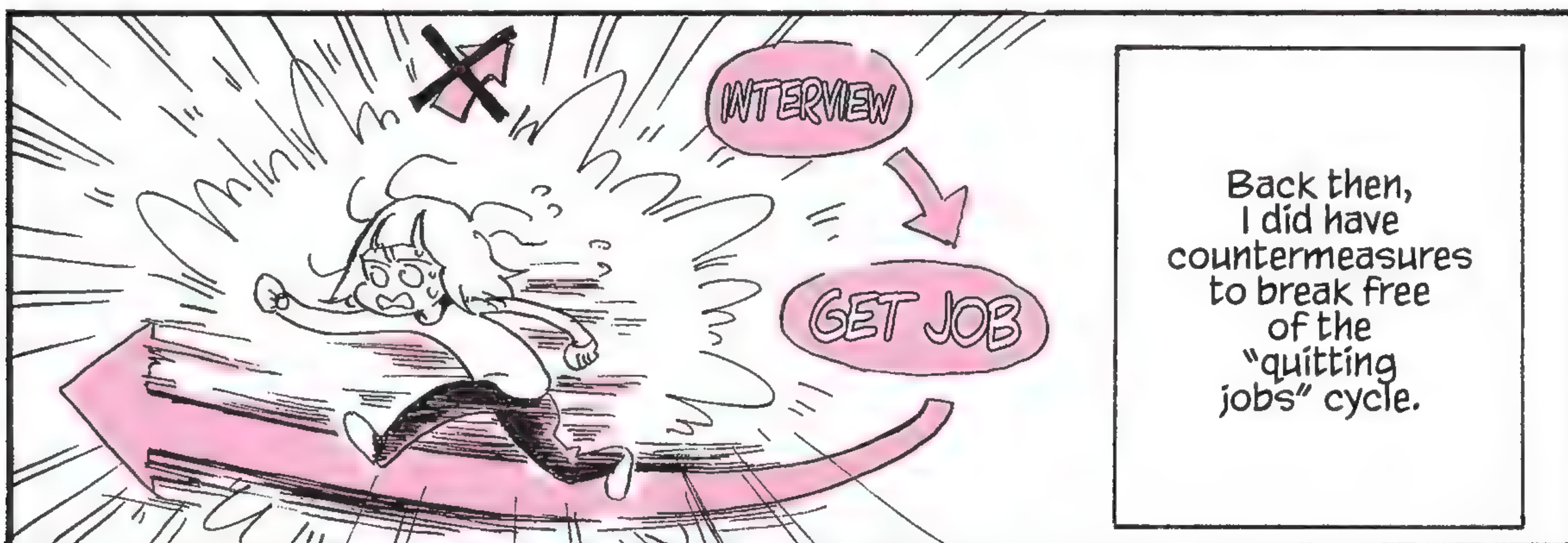
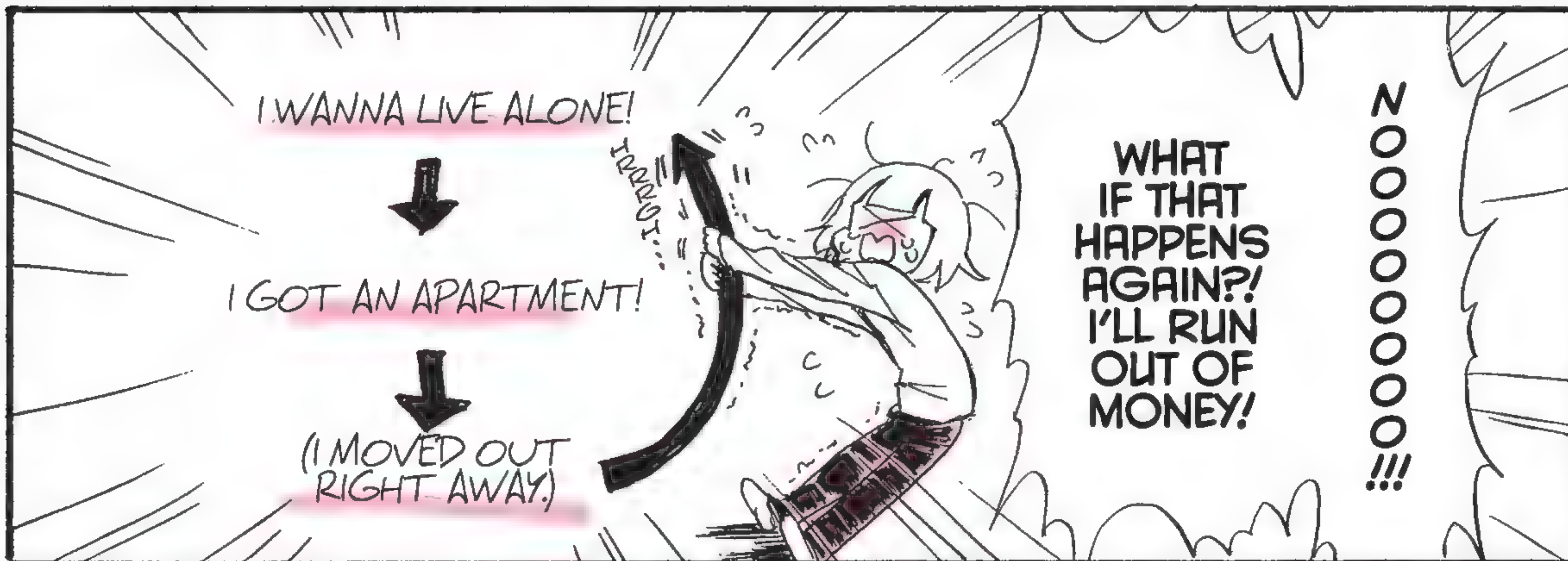
I'd
moved out,
but I was
still jealous
of someone
else getting
their own
place.

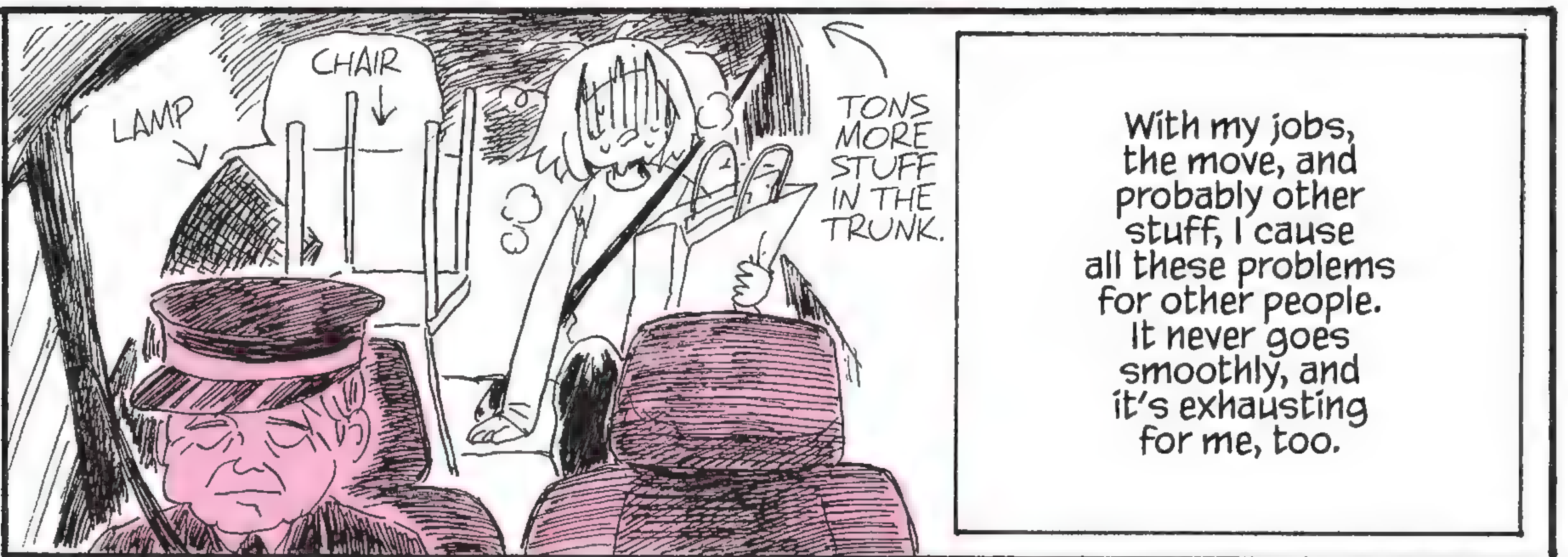
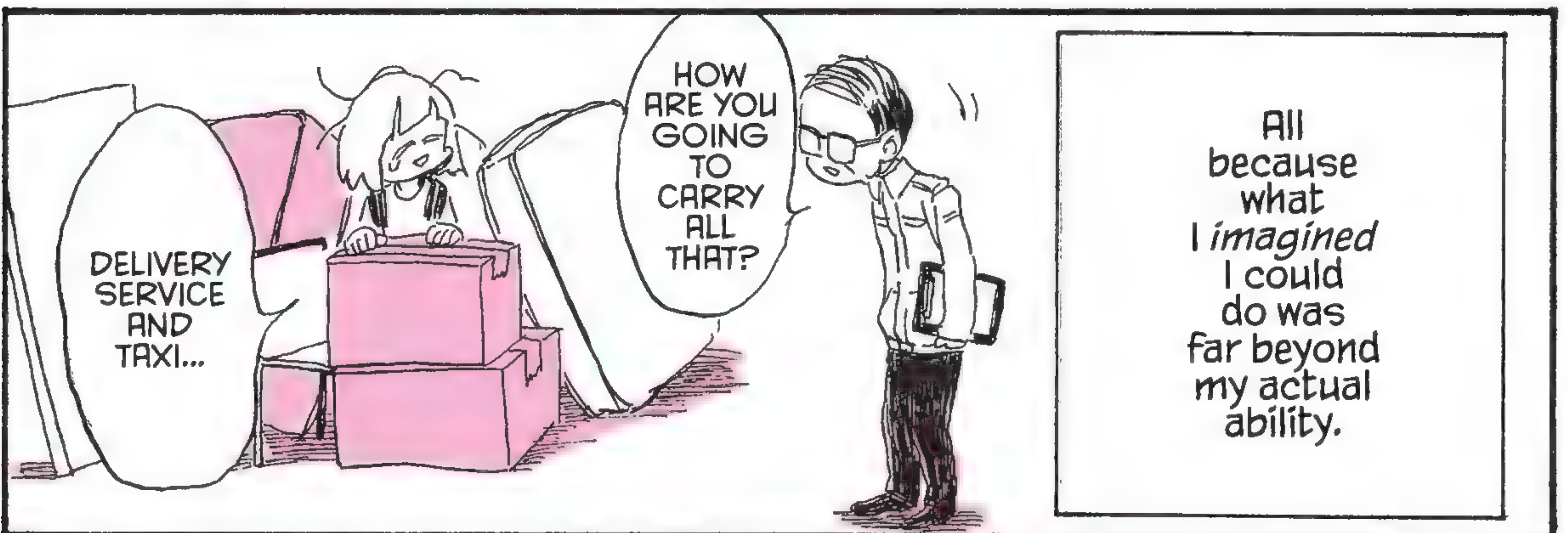
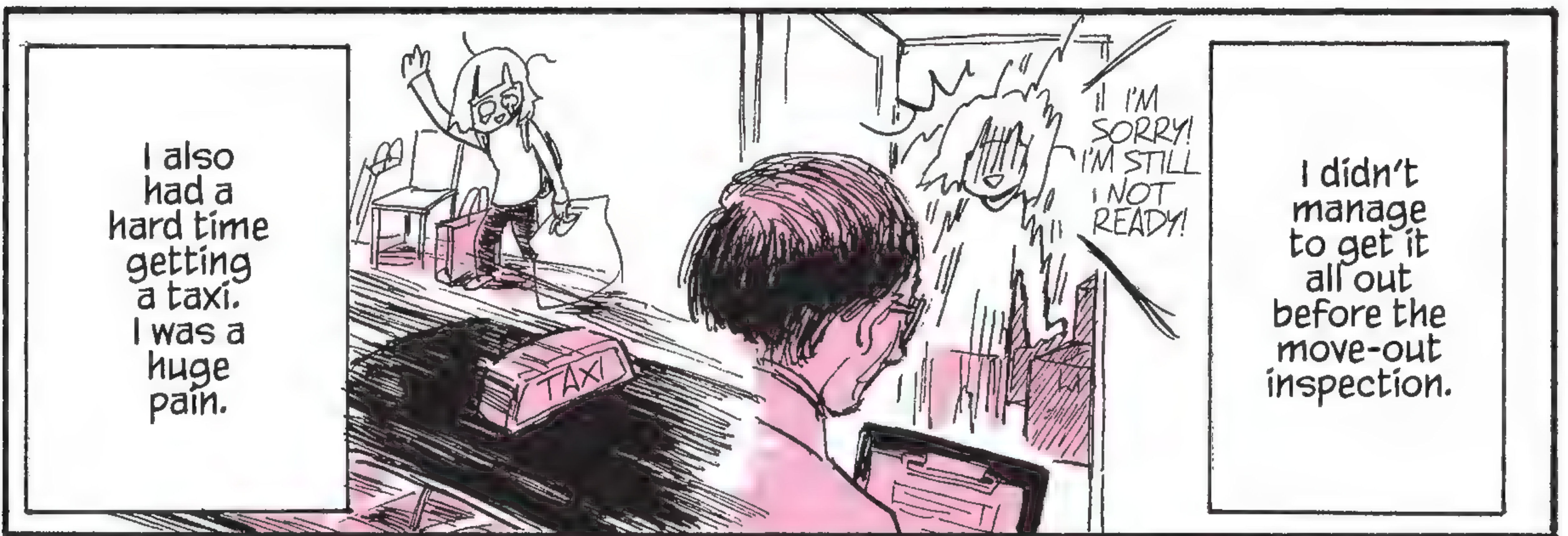
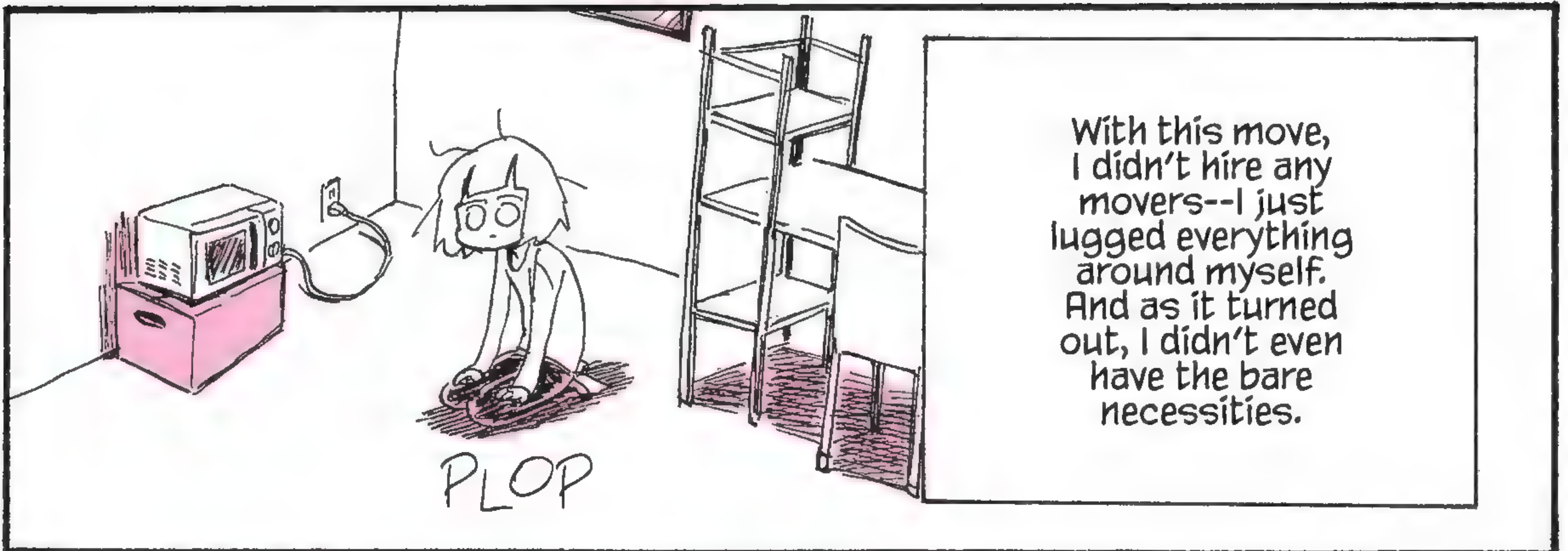
WAIT,
WHAT?

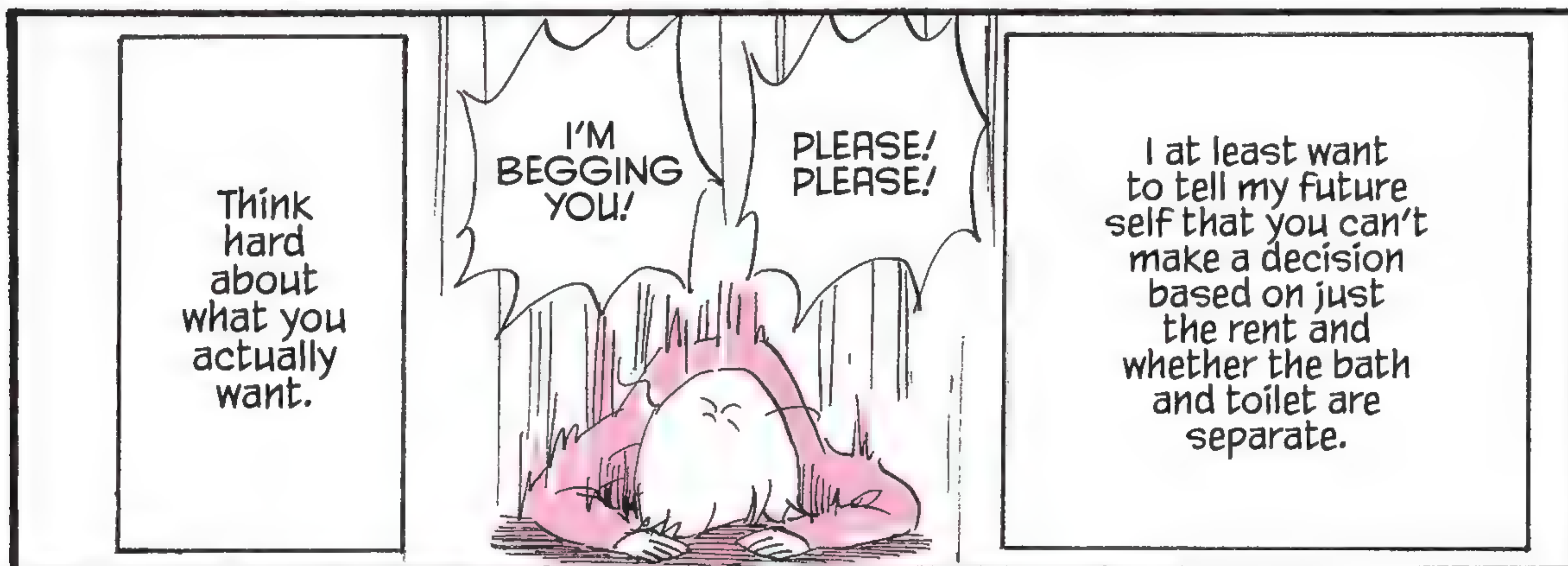
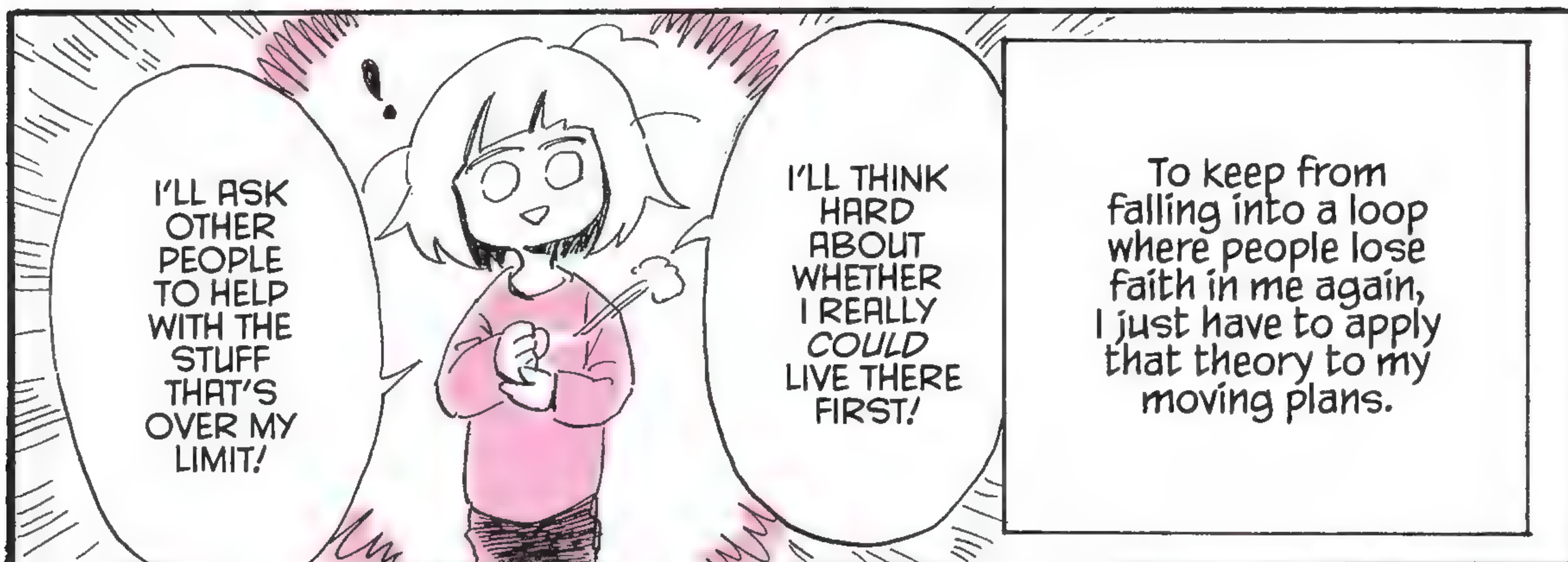


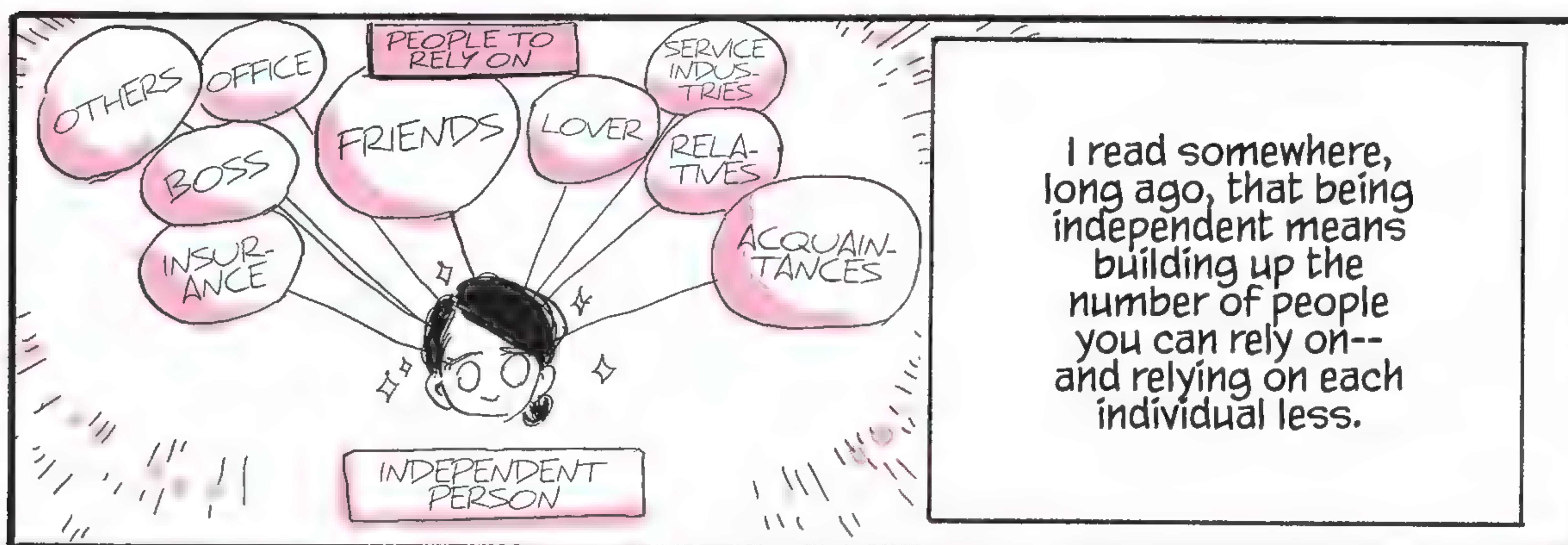
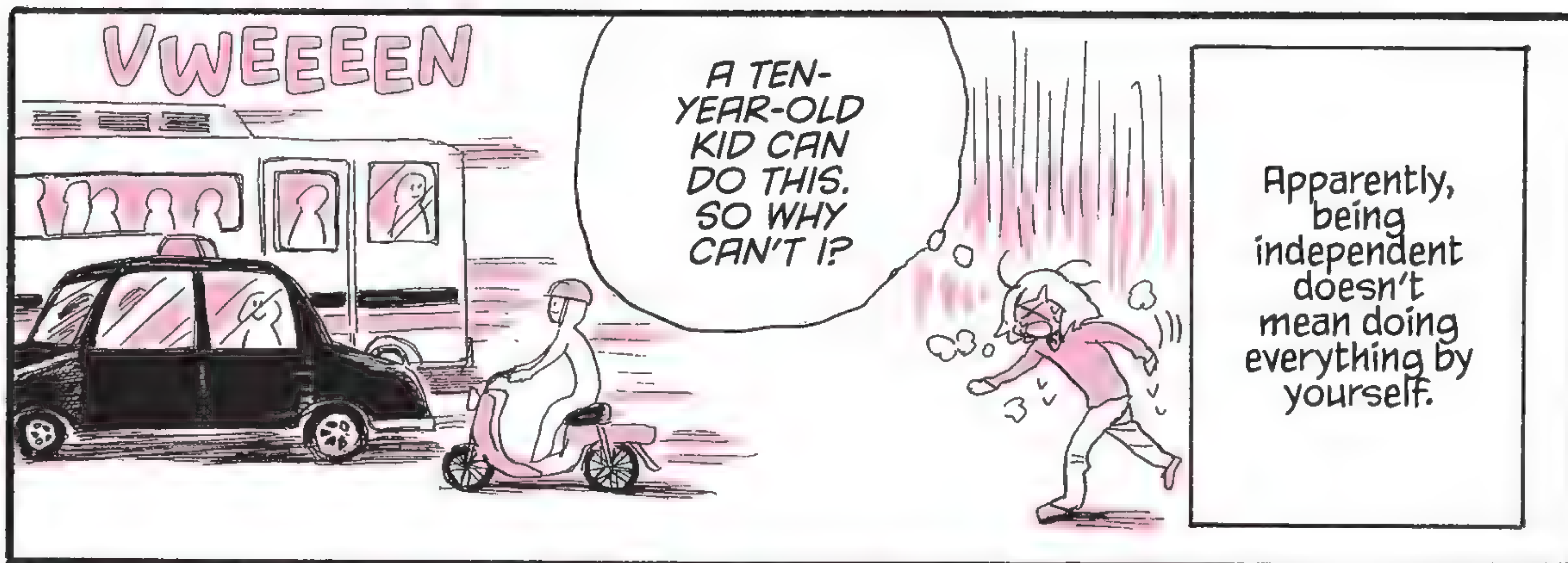


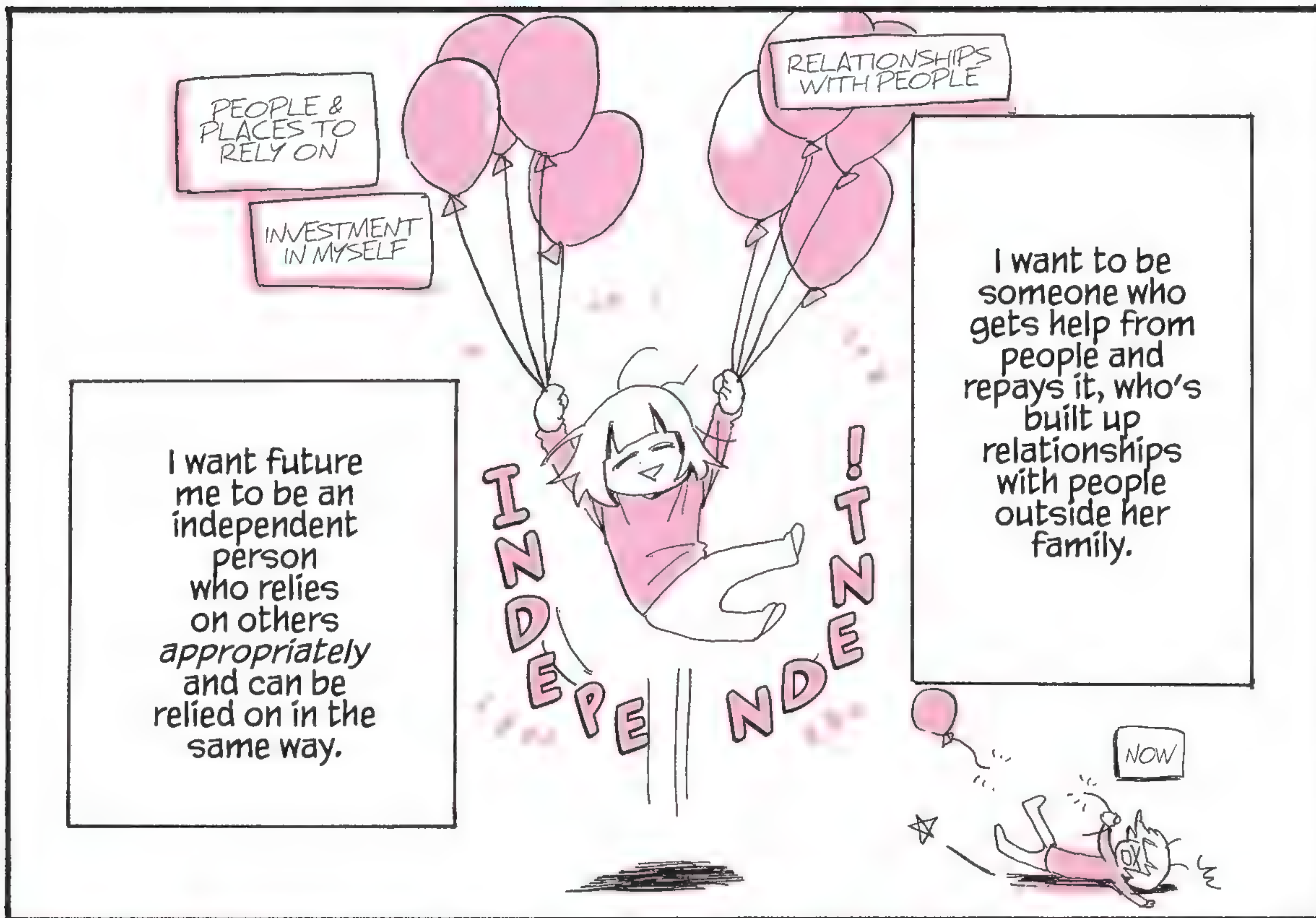






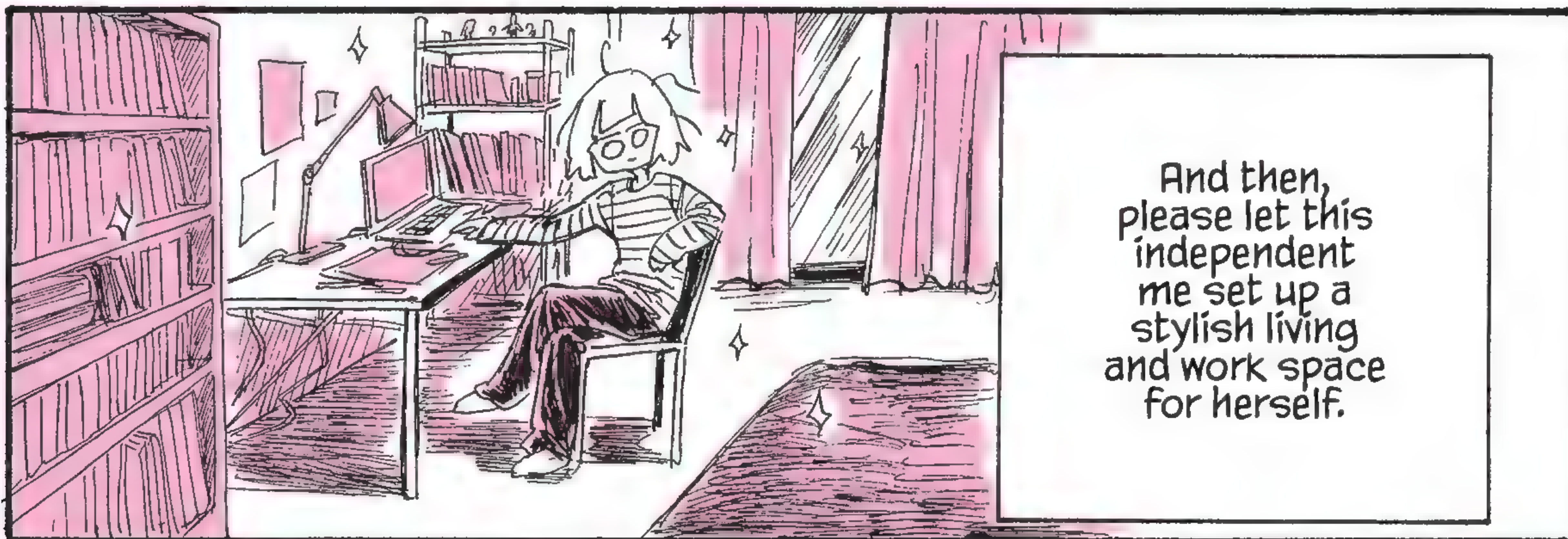






I want future me to be an independent person who relies on others *appropriately* and can be relied on in the same way.

I want to be someone who gets help from people and repays it, who's built up relationships with people outside her family.



And then, please let this independent me set up a stylish living and work space for herself.

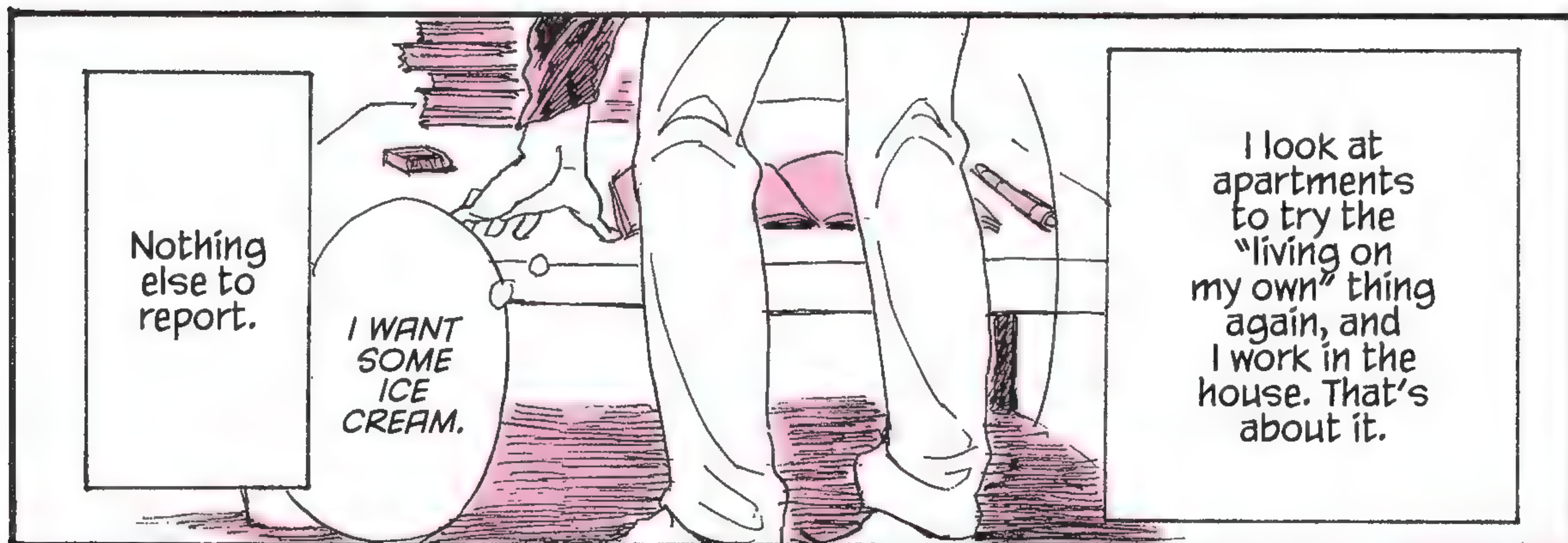


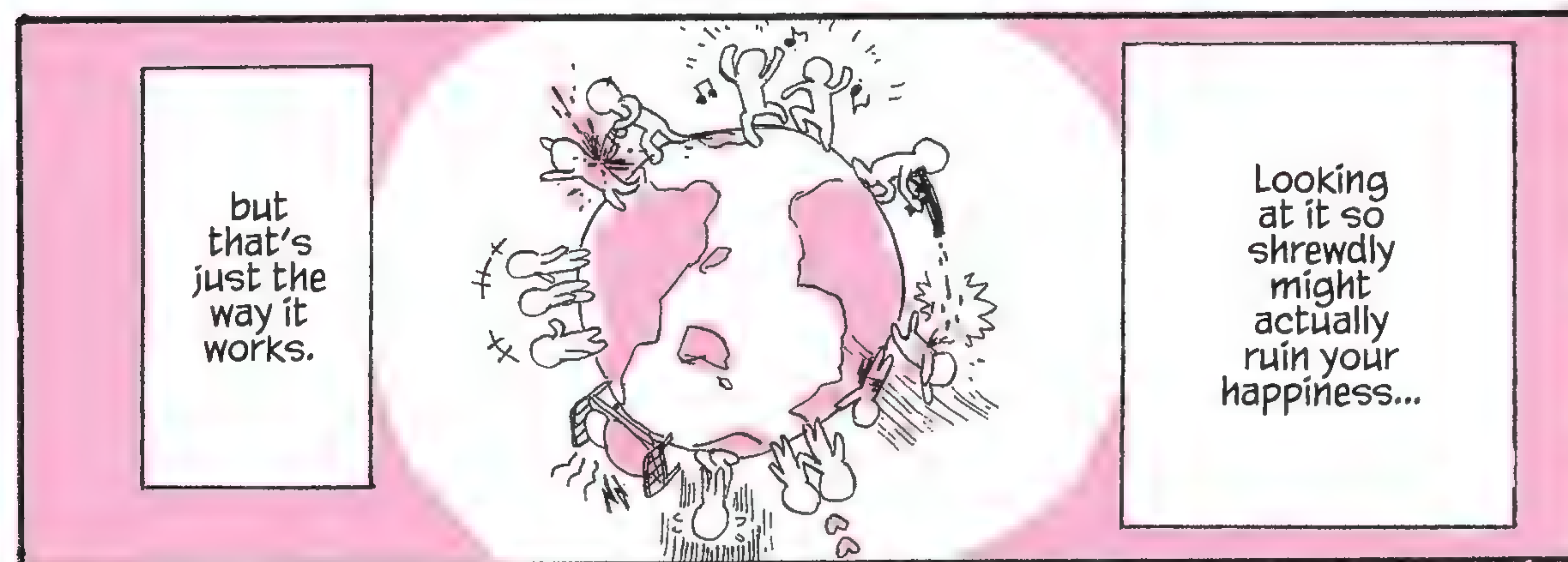
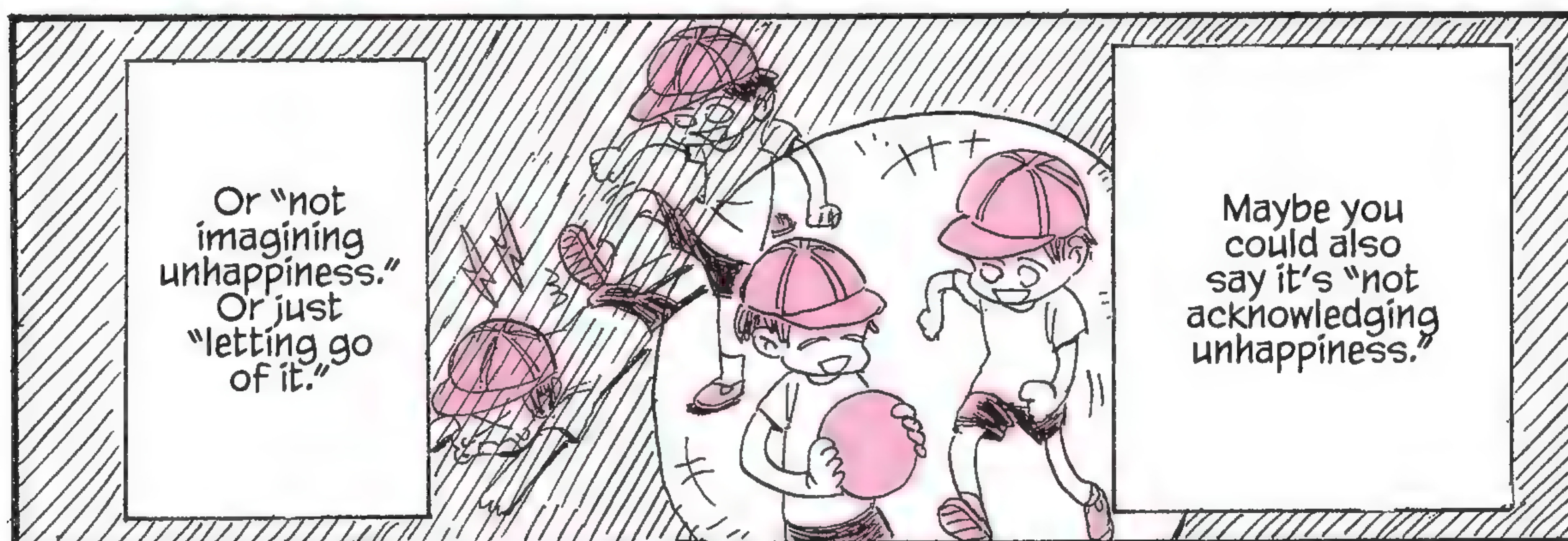
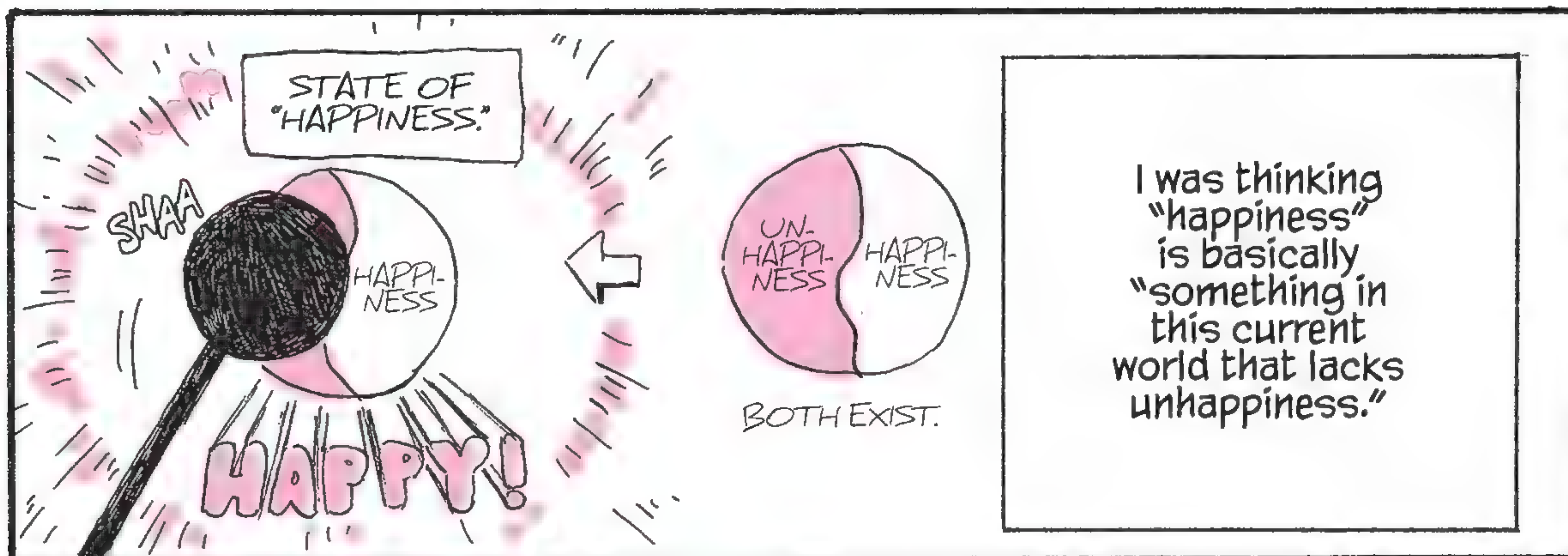
With love, from my parents' house.

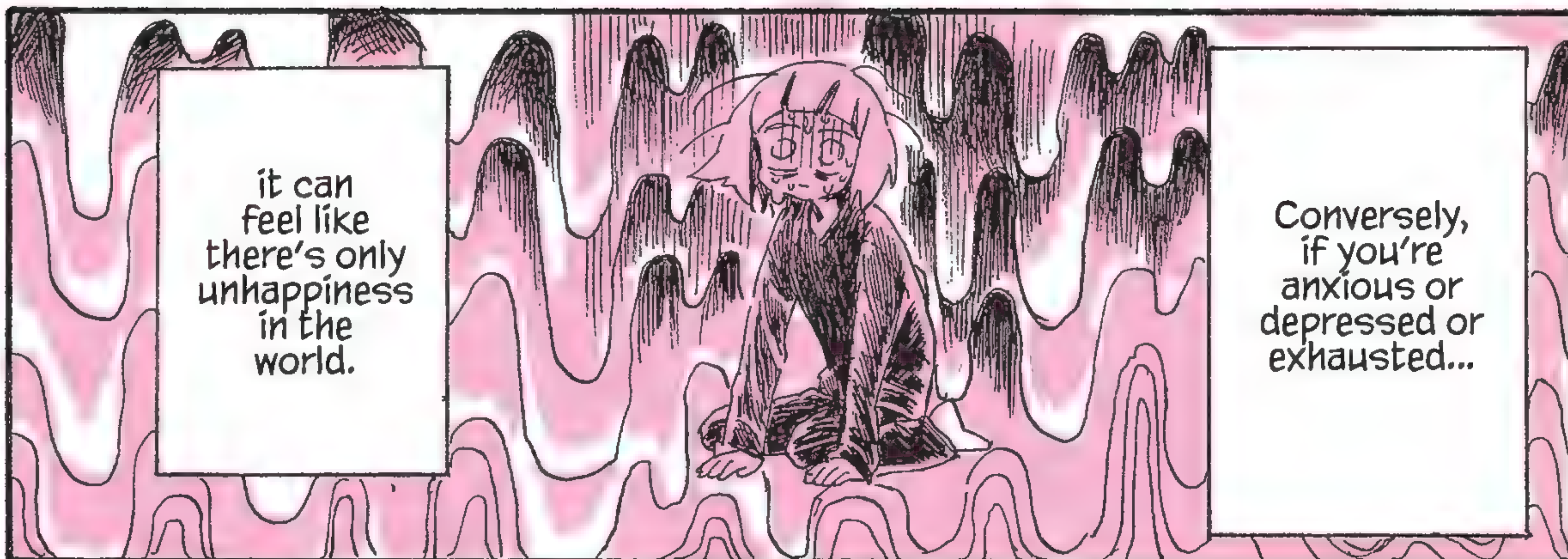
WILL YOU GO PICK SOME THINGS UP FOR ME?

At any rate, I'm staying at my parents' place until my deadlines settle down, but I'm asking you to do this as soon as possible.

My
Solo
Exchange
Diary







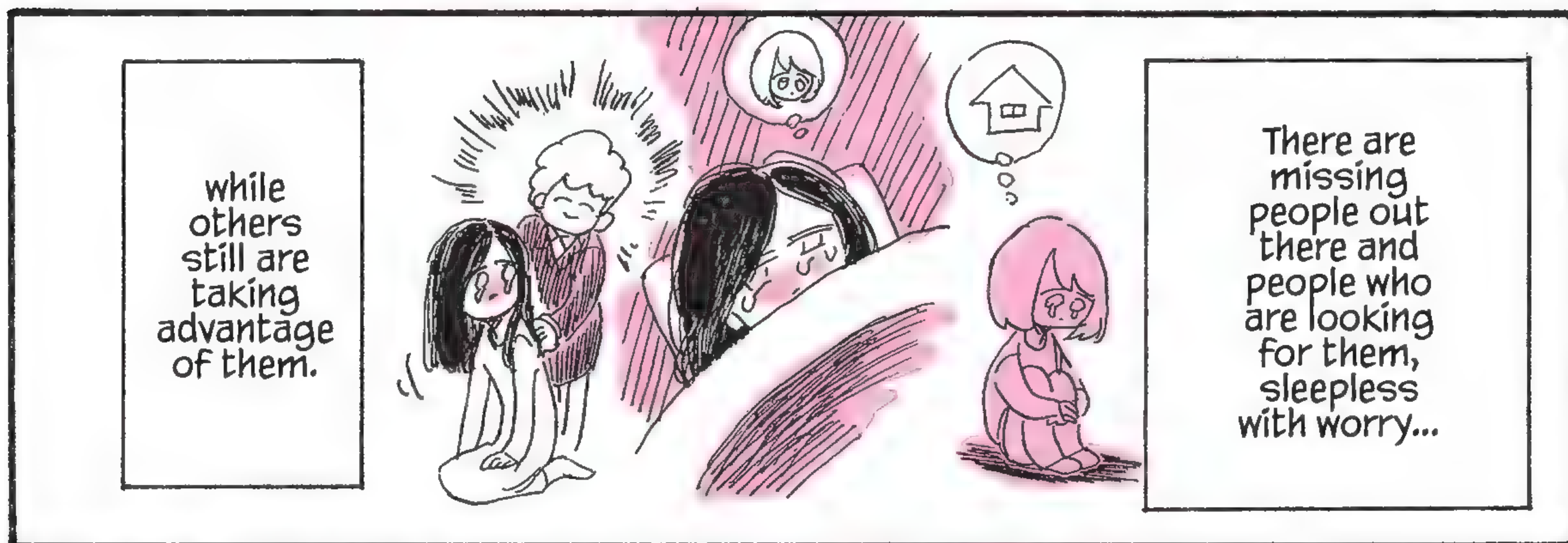
it can
feel like
there's only
unhappiness
in the
world.

Conversely,
if you're
anxious or
depressed or
exhausted...



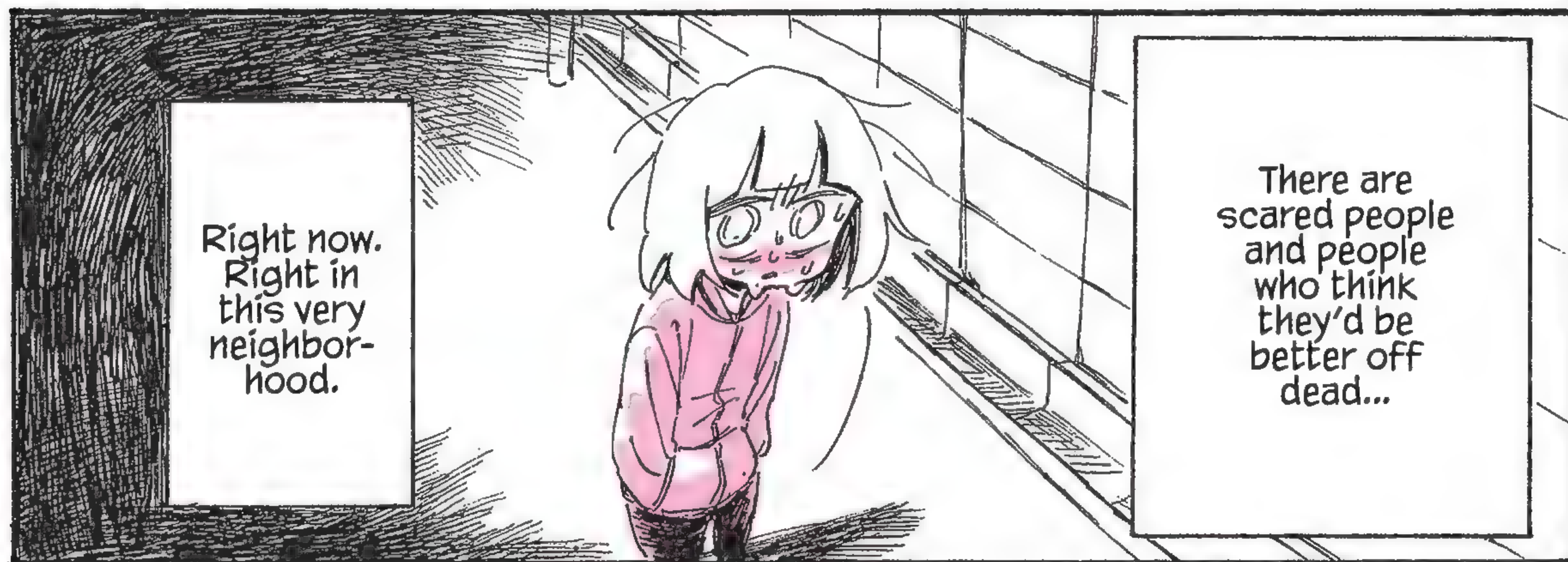
Maybe
you just
happened
to be
different,
is all.

Right at
this very
moment,
people
everywhere
are
dealing with
terrifying
things.
It's almost
dizzying.



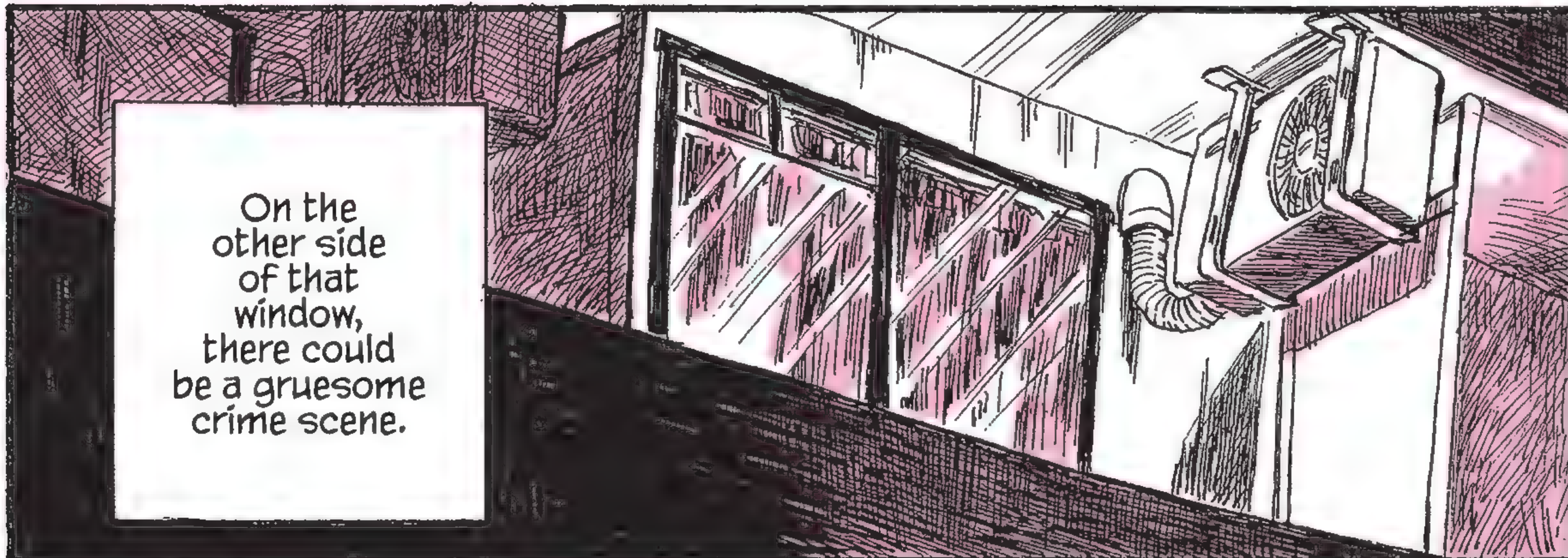
while
others
still are
taking
advantage
of them.

There are
missing
people out
there and
people who
are looking
for them,
sleepless
with worry...

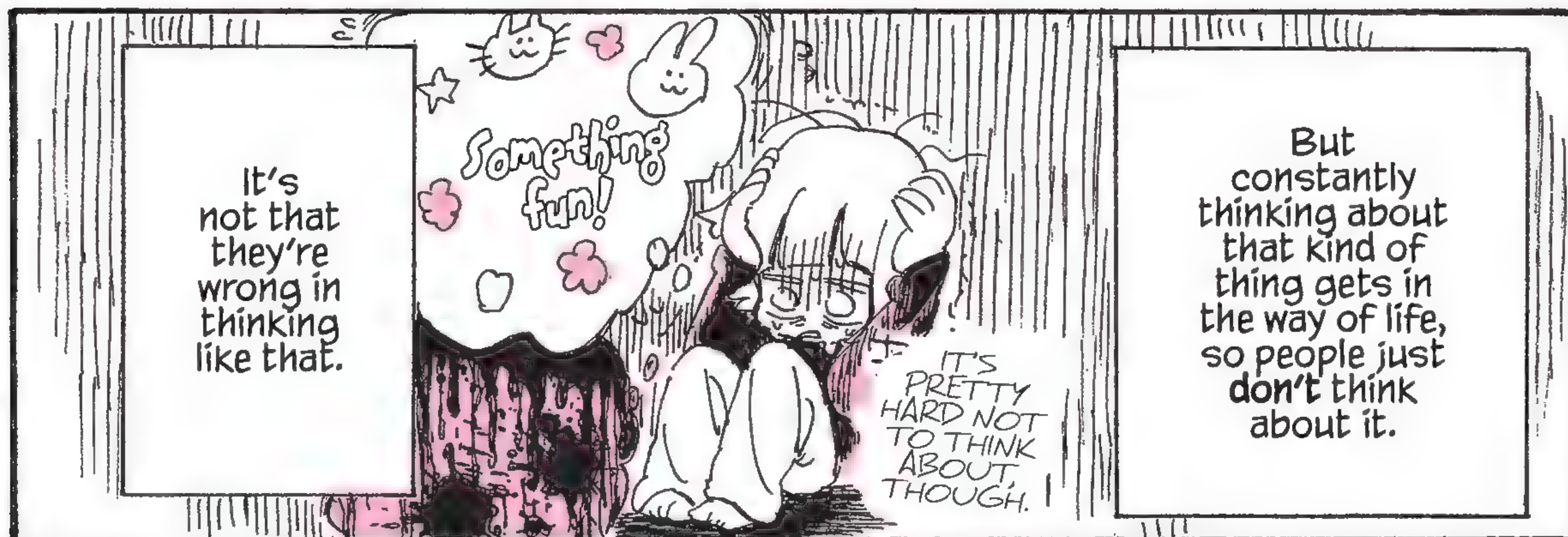


Right now.
Right in
this very
neighbor-
hood.

There are
scared people
and people
who think
they'd be
better off
dead...



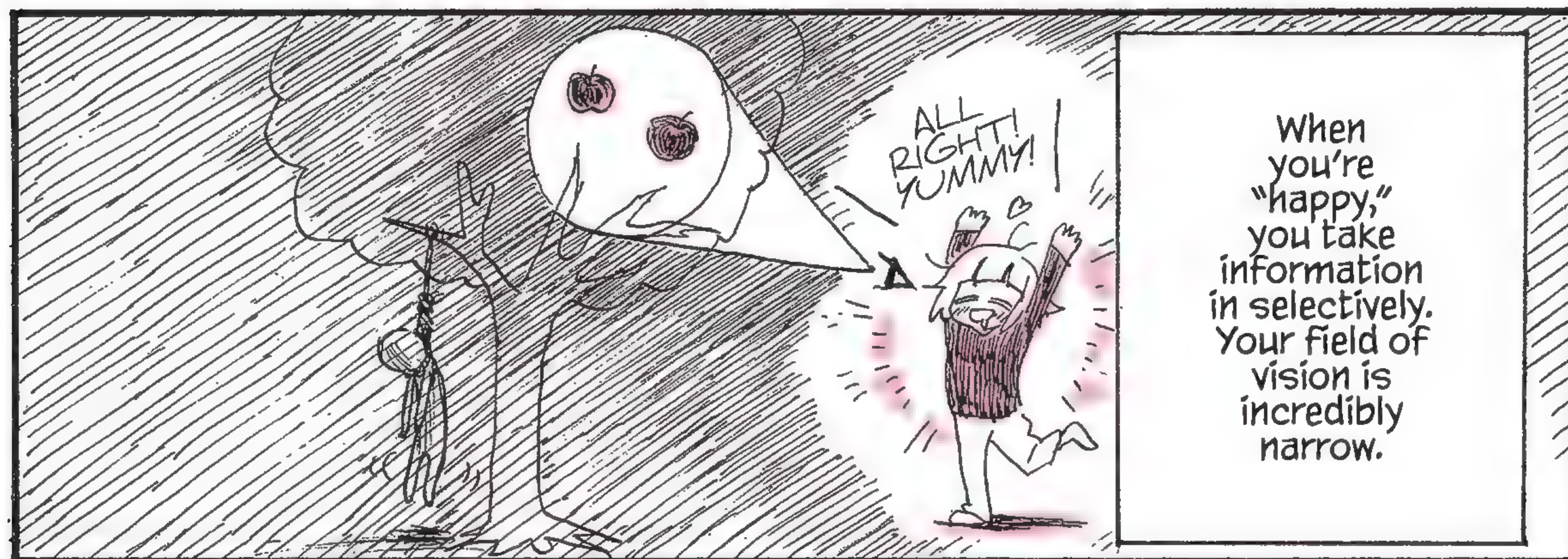
On the other side of that window, there could be a gruesome crime scene.



It's not that they're wrong in thinking like that.

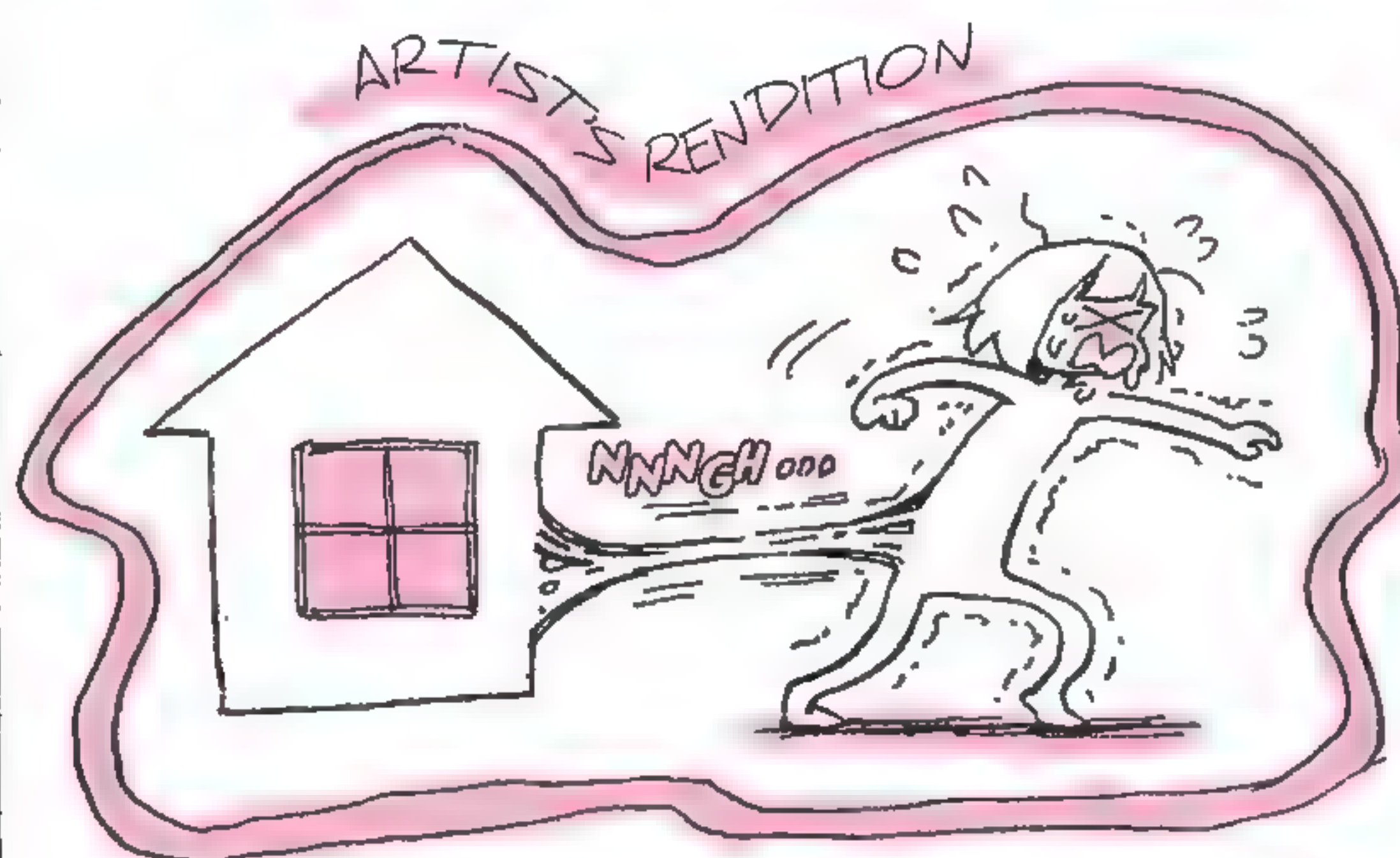
IT'S PRETTY HARD NOT TO THINK ABOUT, THOUGH.

But constantly thinking about that kind of thing gets in the way of life, so people just don't think about it.



When you're "happy," you take information in selectively. Your field of vision is incredibly narrow.

There's a powerful attractive force at my parents' house--plus another force that makes it impossible to move away. I realized that again after I came back.



Changing the topic, I have one more thought.

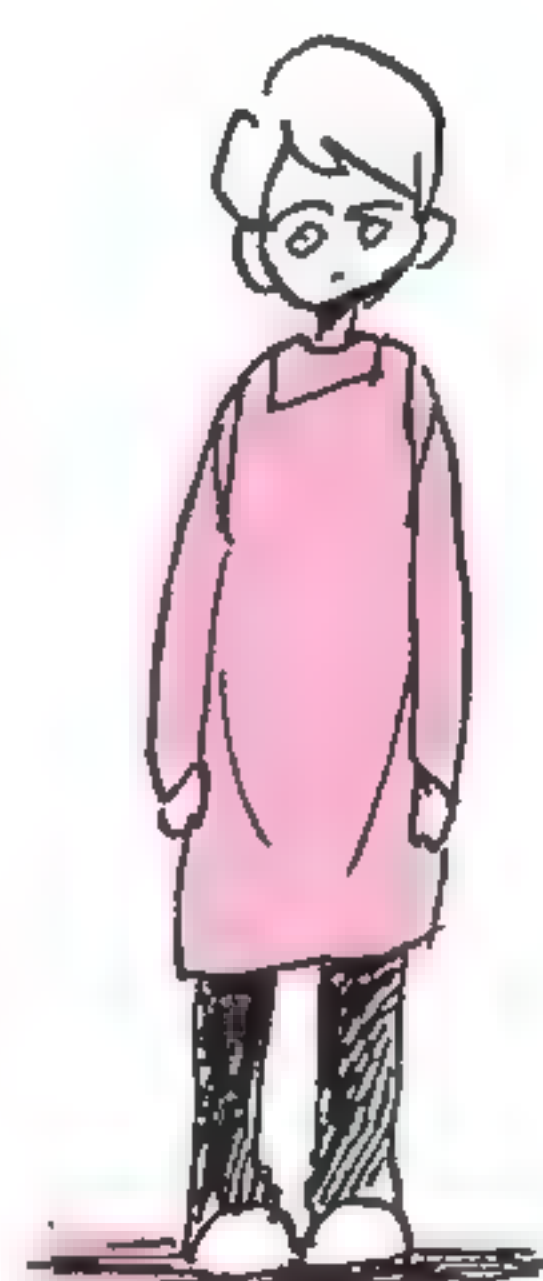
I'M ACTUALLY WORRIED ABOUT LEAVING MOM BY HERSELF.

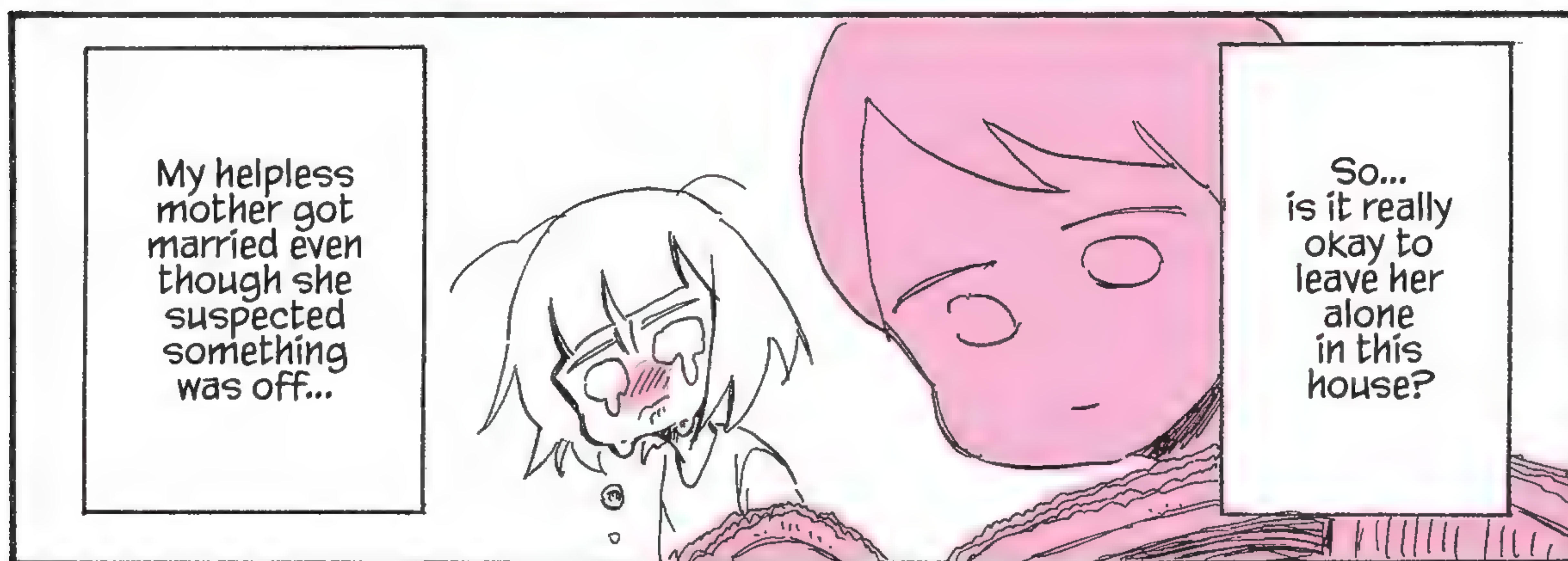
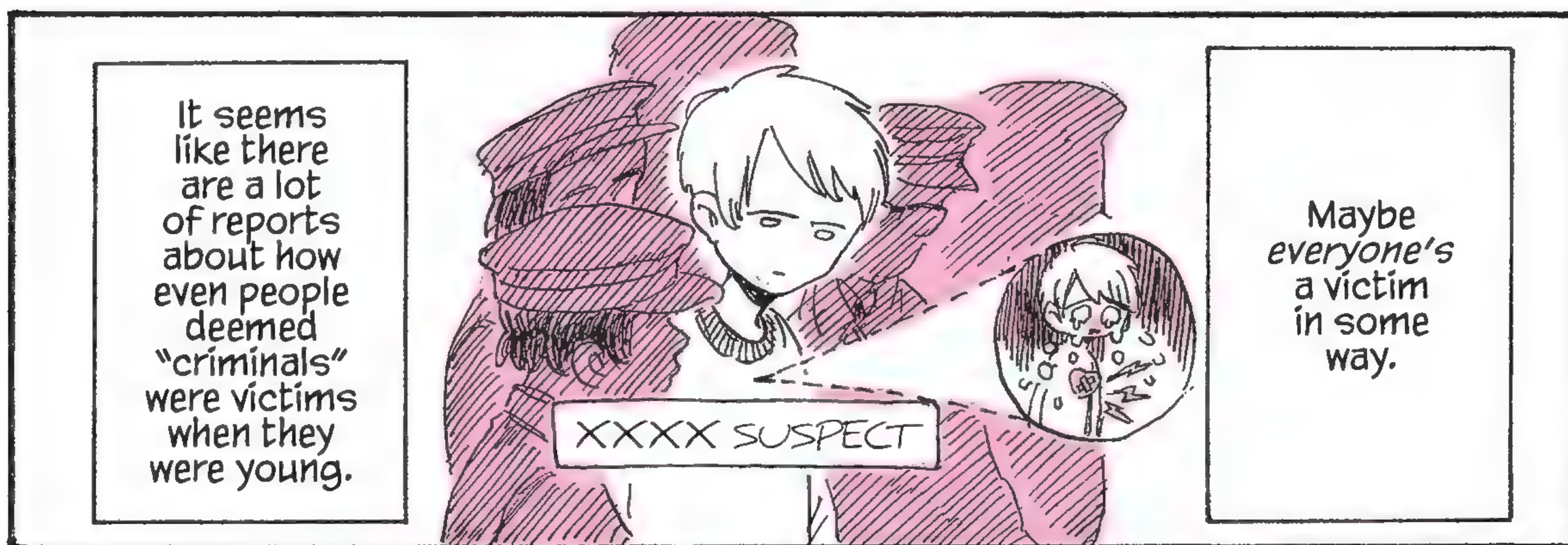
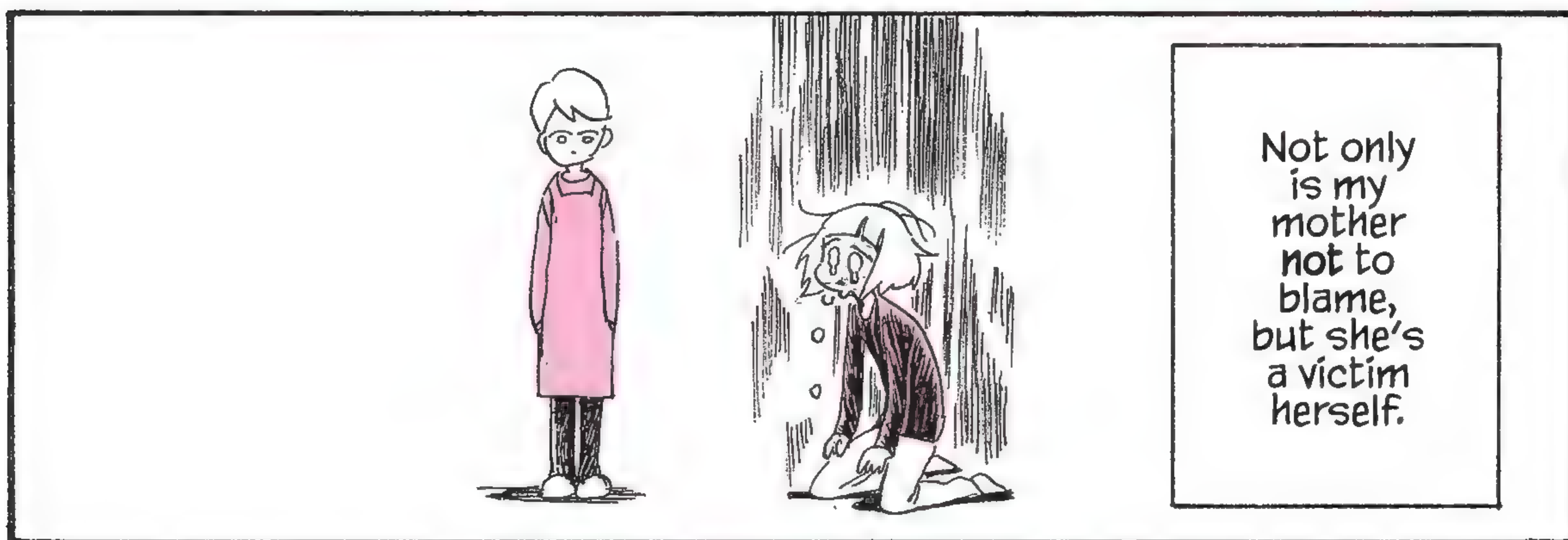
ALSO...

I HATE HER... I HATE HER!

Until a few years ago, I thought the pain in my life was all because of my mother.

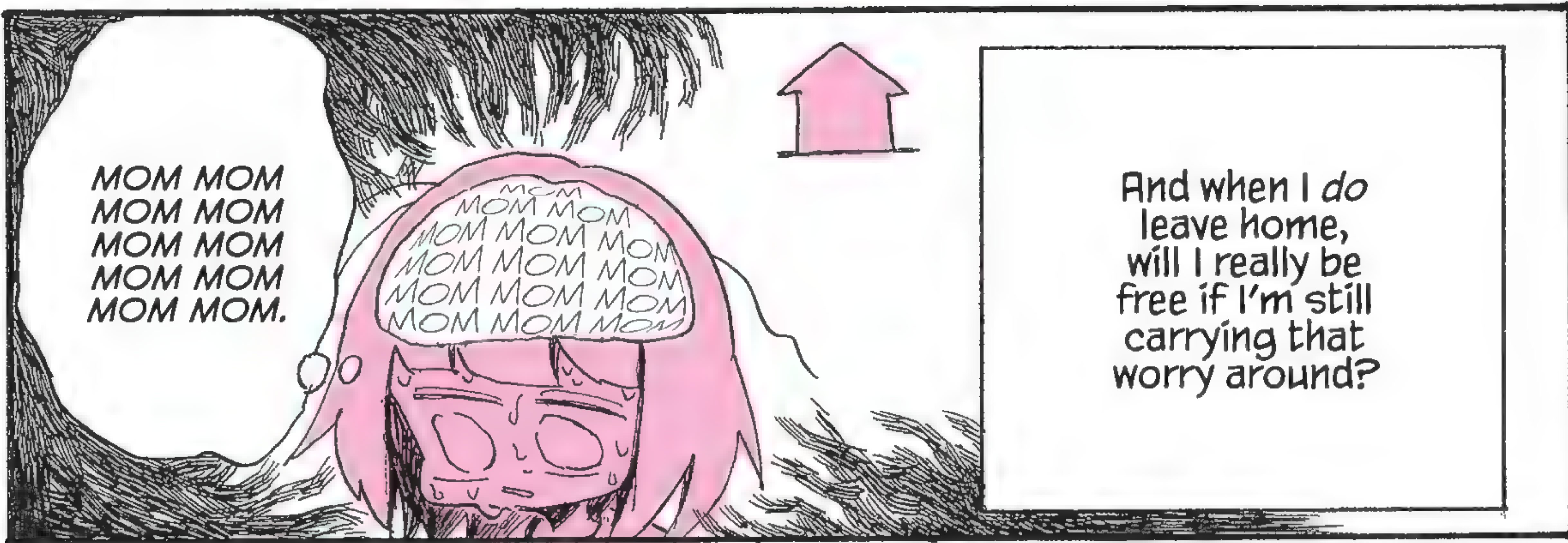
Only recently did I realize that that wasn't the case.



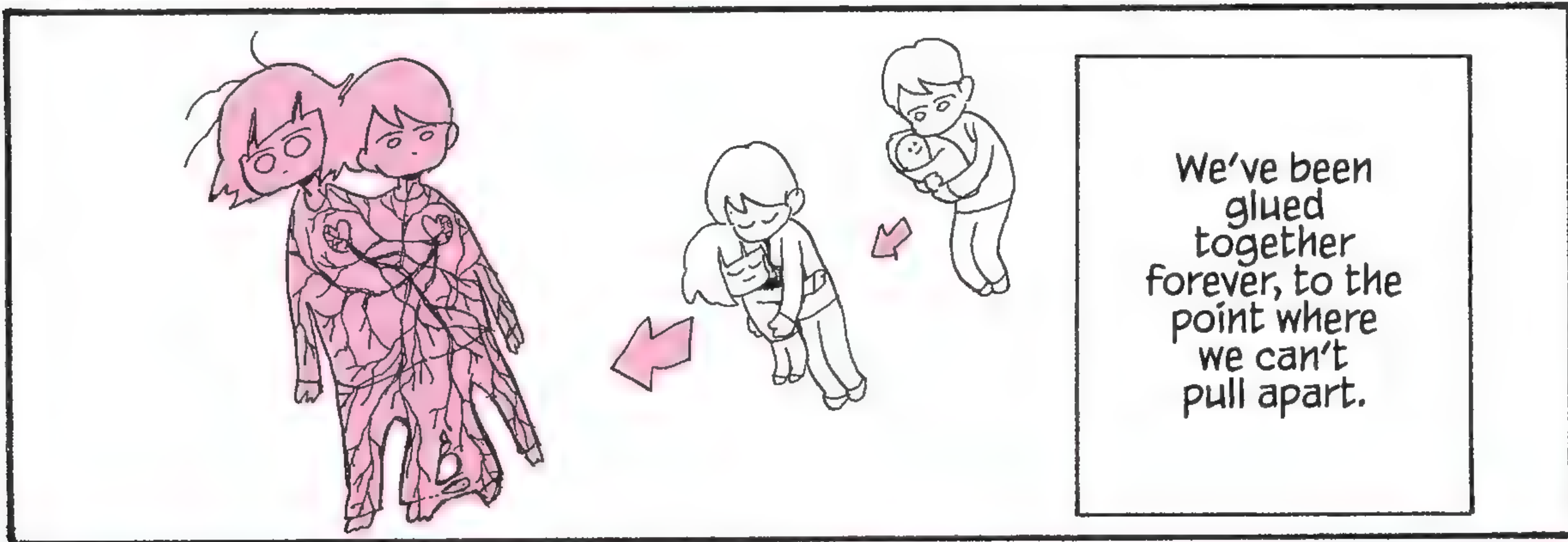




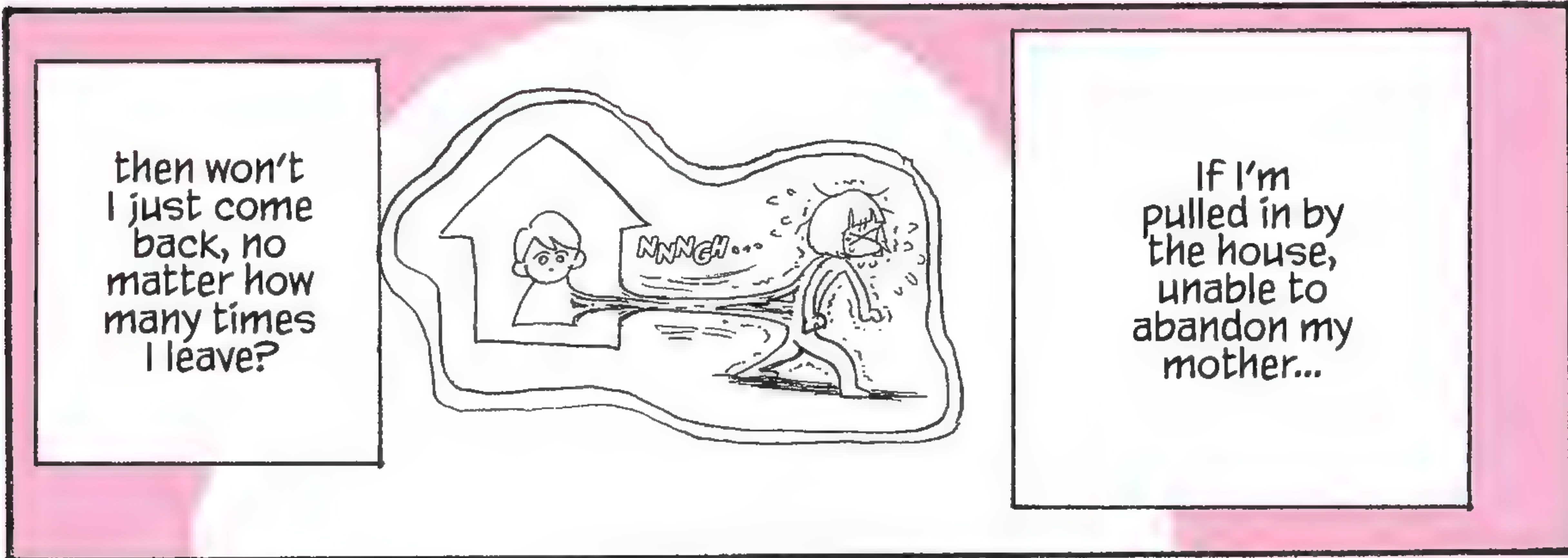
What's gonna happen to her when she has no allies in this house?



And when I do leave home, will I really be free if I'm still carrying that worry around?

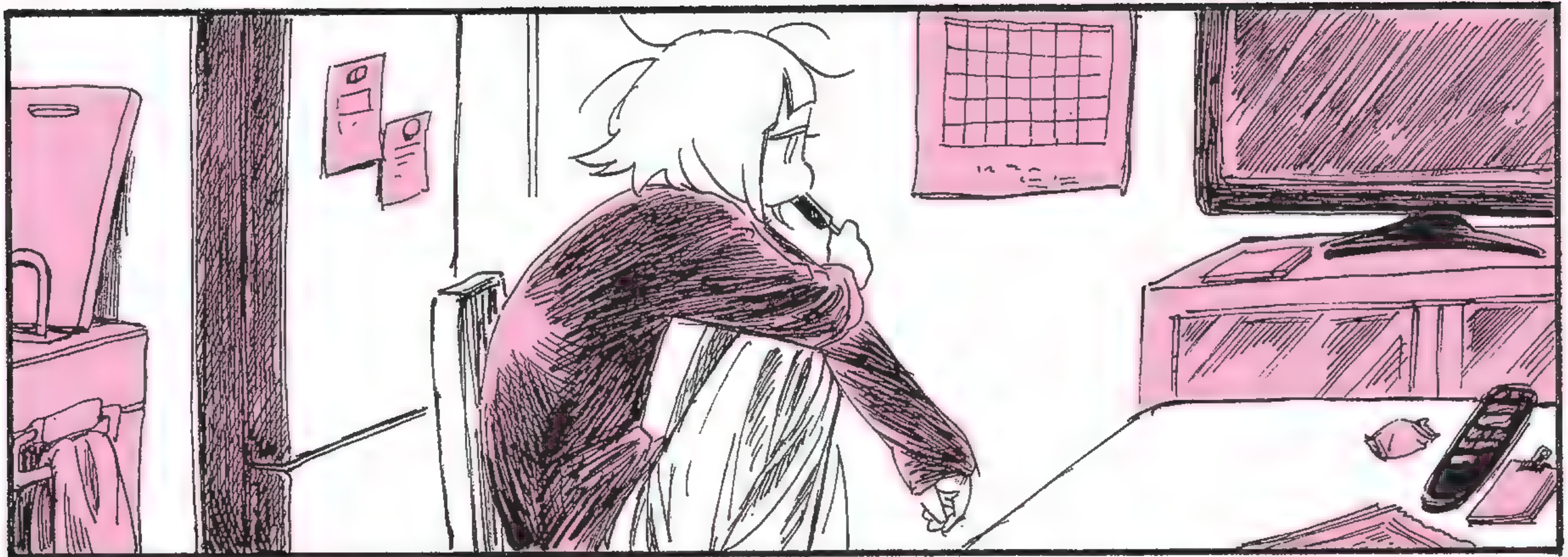


We've been glued together forever, to the point where we can't pull apart.



then won't I just come back, no matter how many times I leave?

If I'm pulled in by the house, unable to abandon my mother...



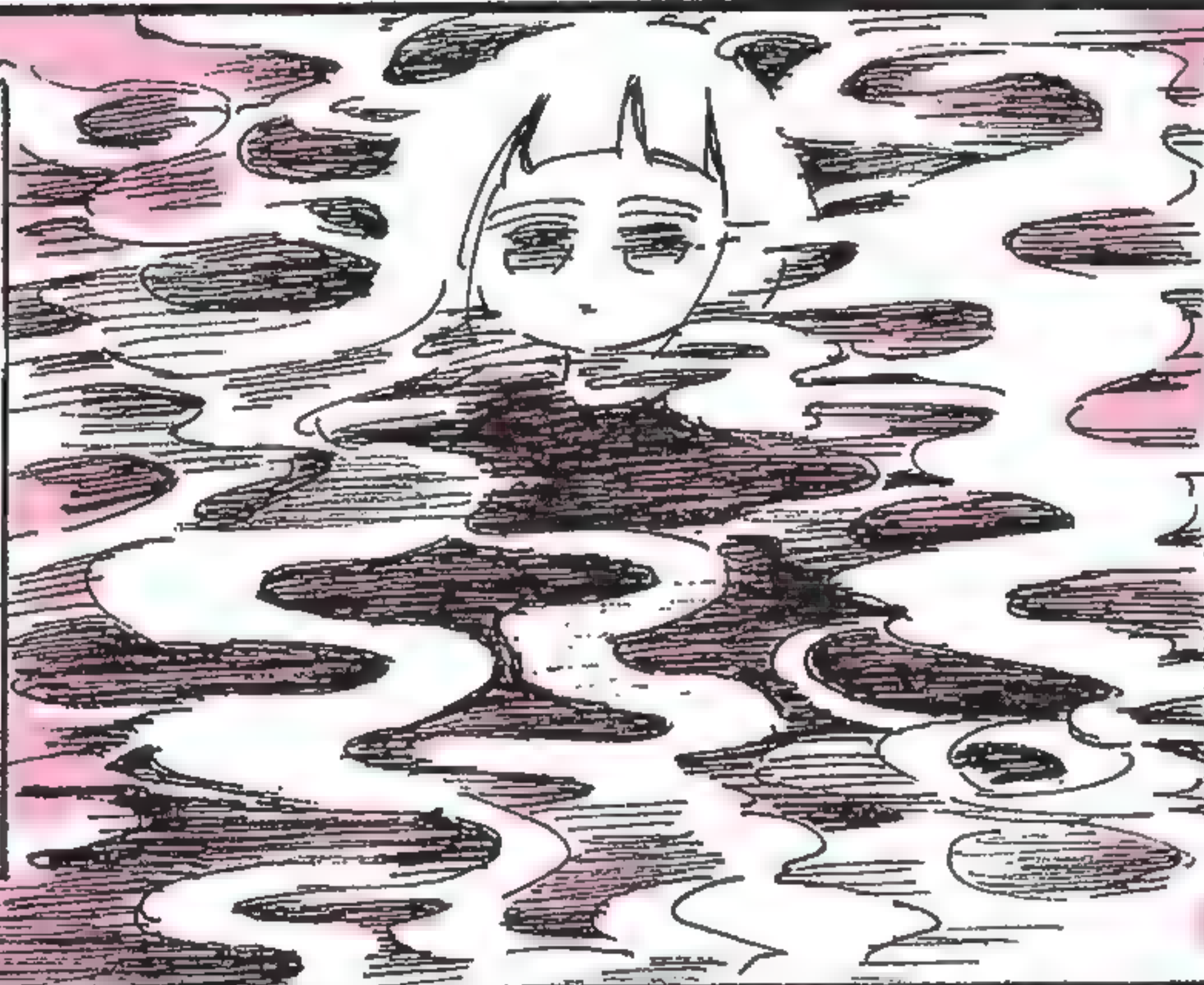
HAPPINESS
IS...
IGNORING
YOUR
UNHAPPINESS.
ABANDONING
IT.

...

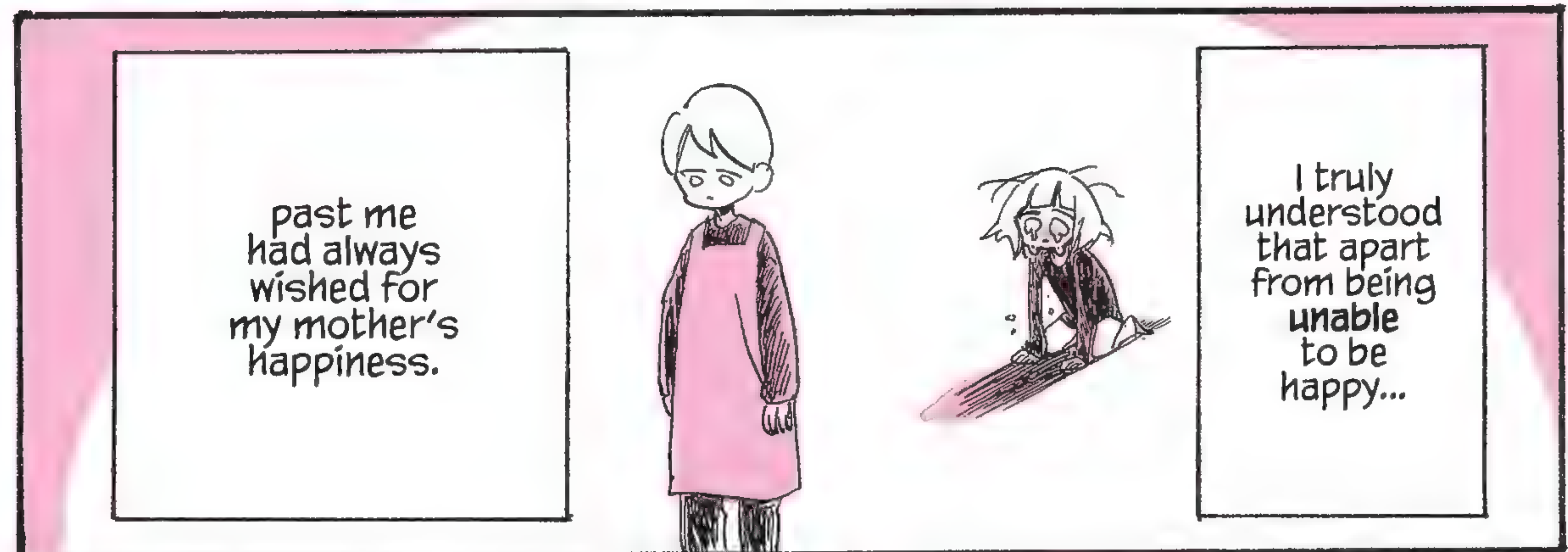
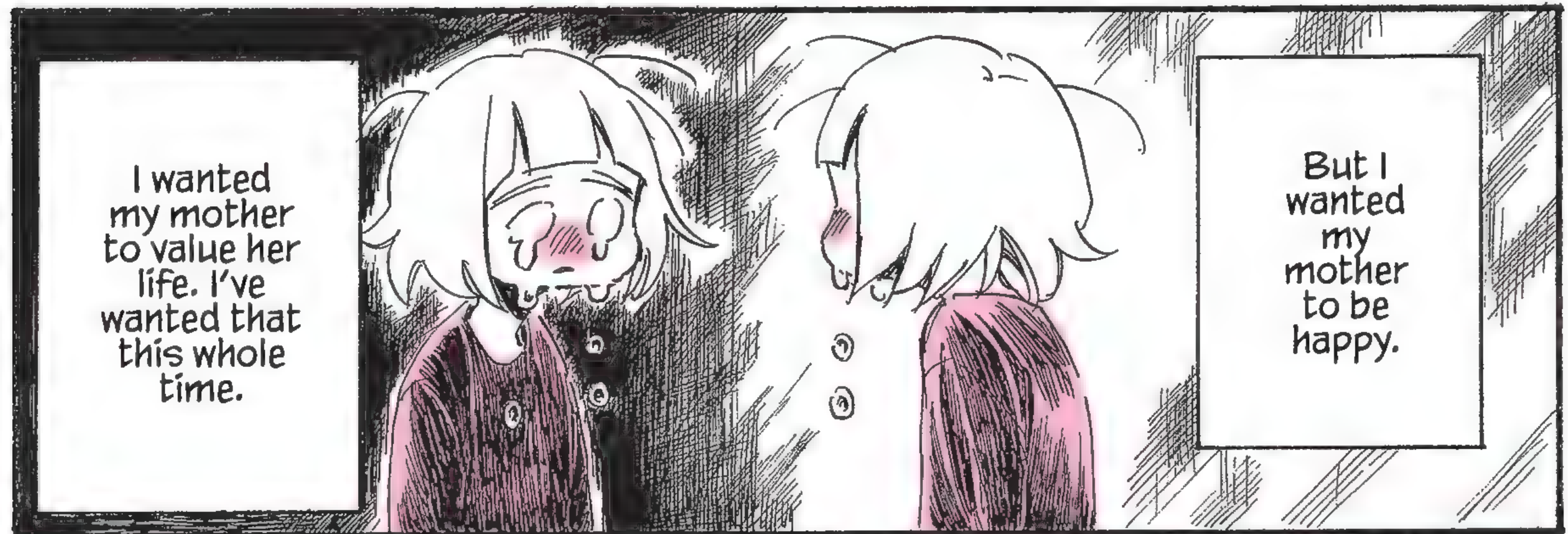
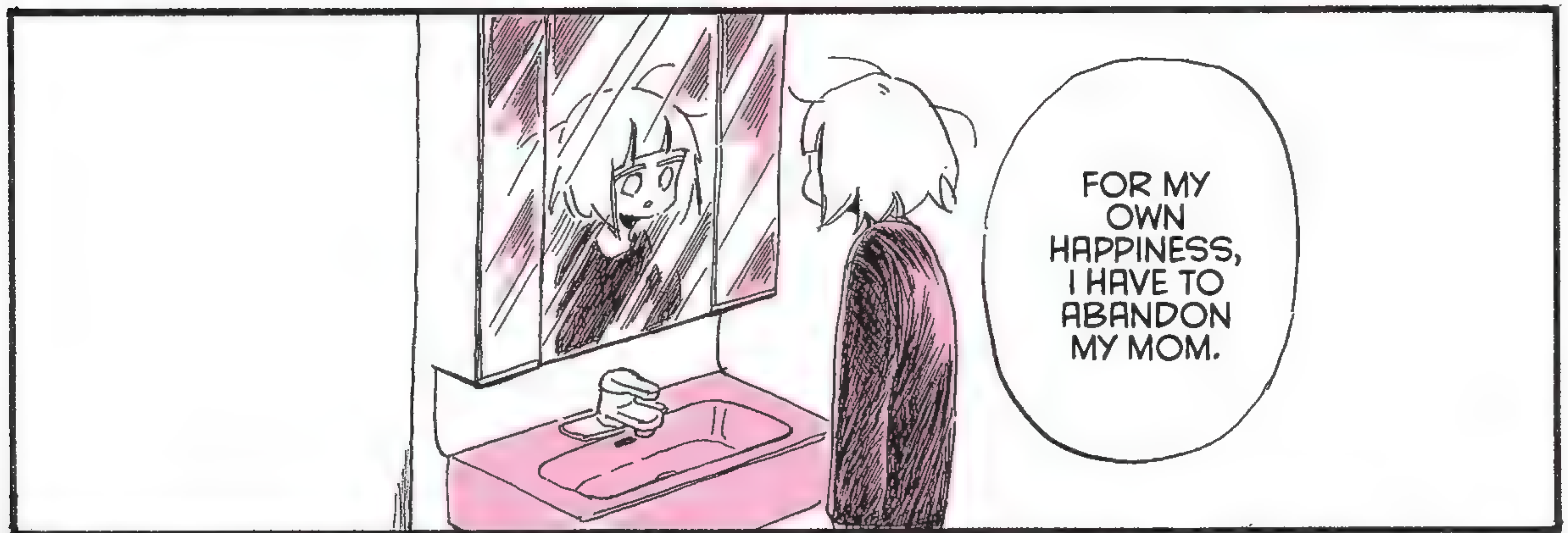
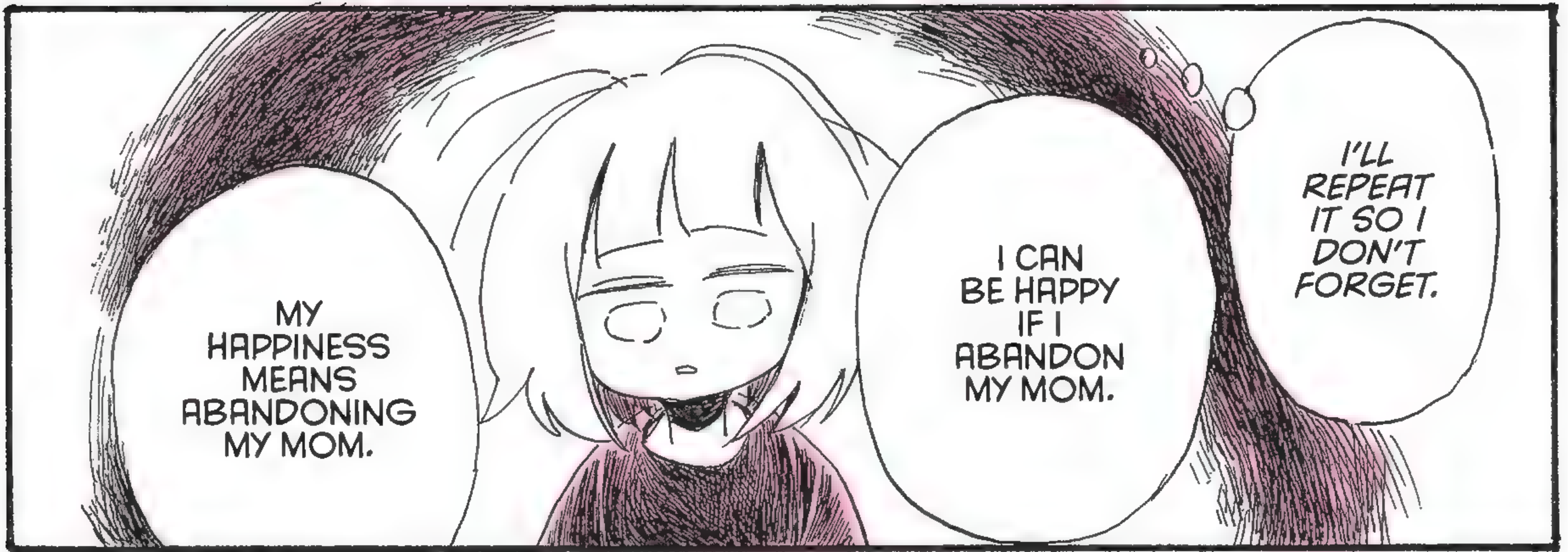
ABANDONING
MY
MOTHER.

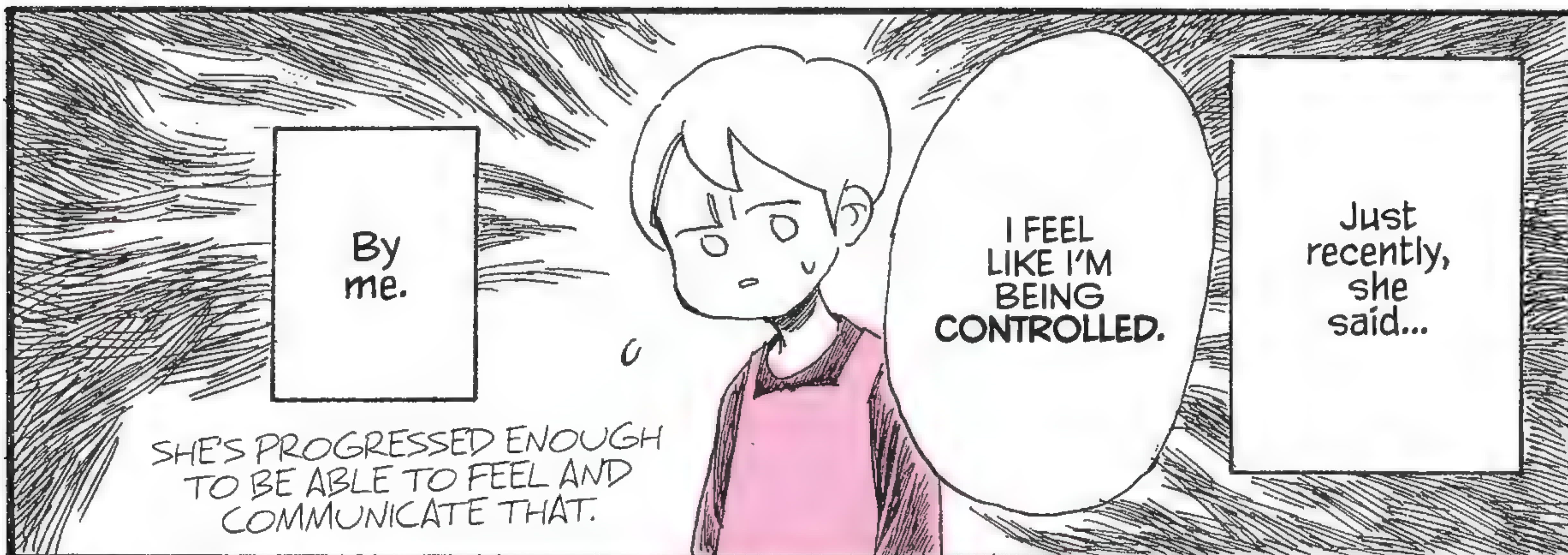
MY
HAPPINESS
IS...

All my
thoughts
on the
matter
tried to
dissipate
like mist.



That was
when I learned
that you
can reject
something
you know to
be true.

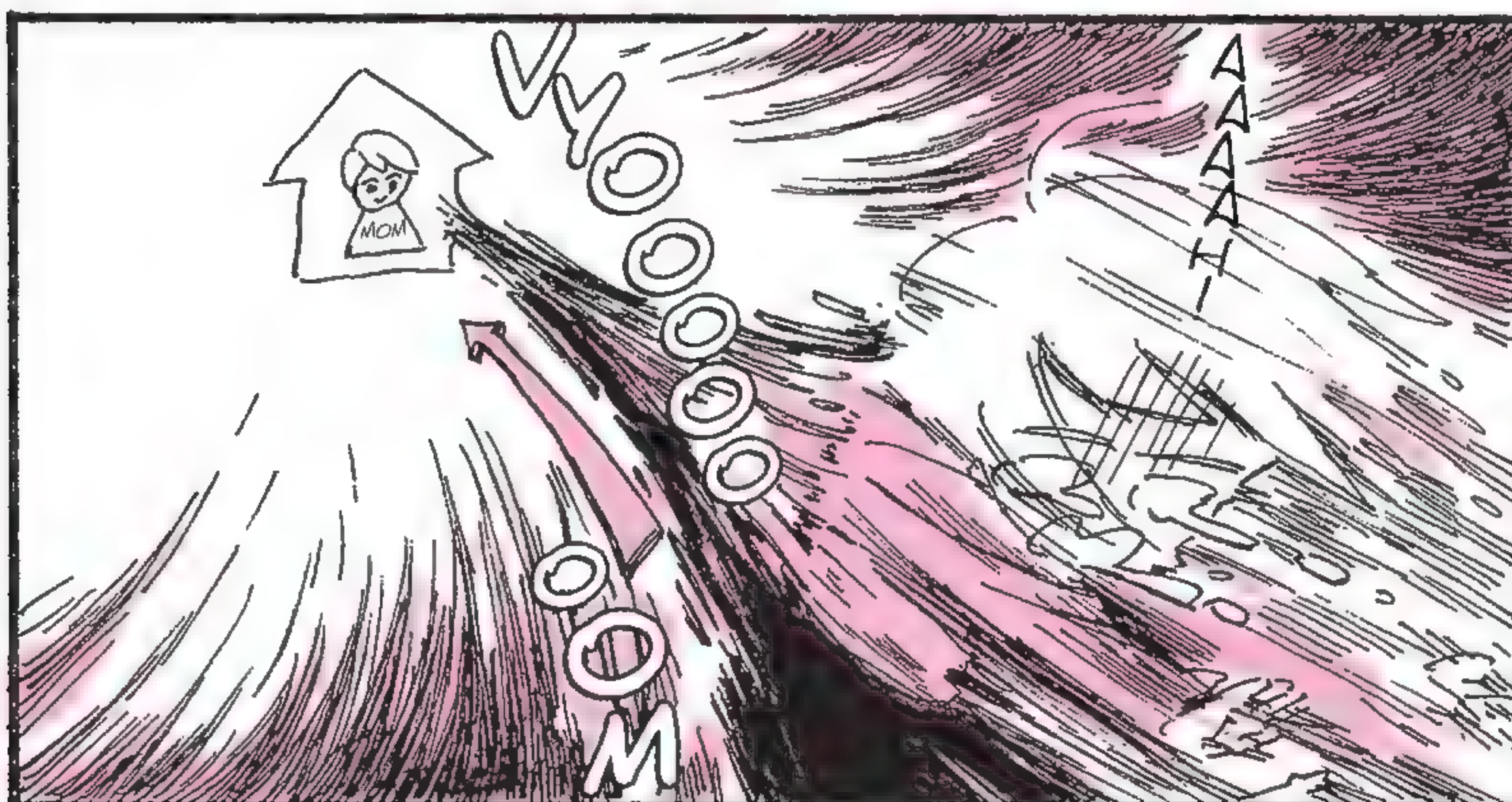




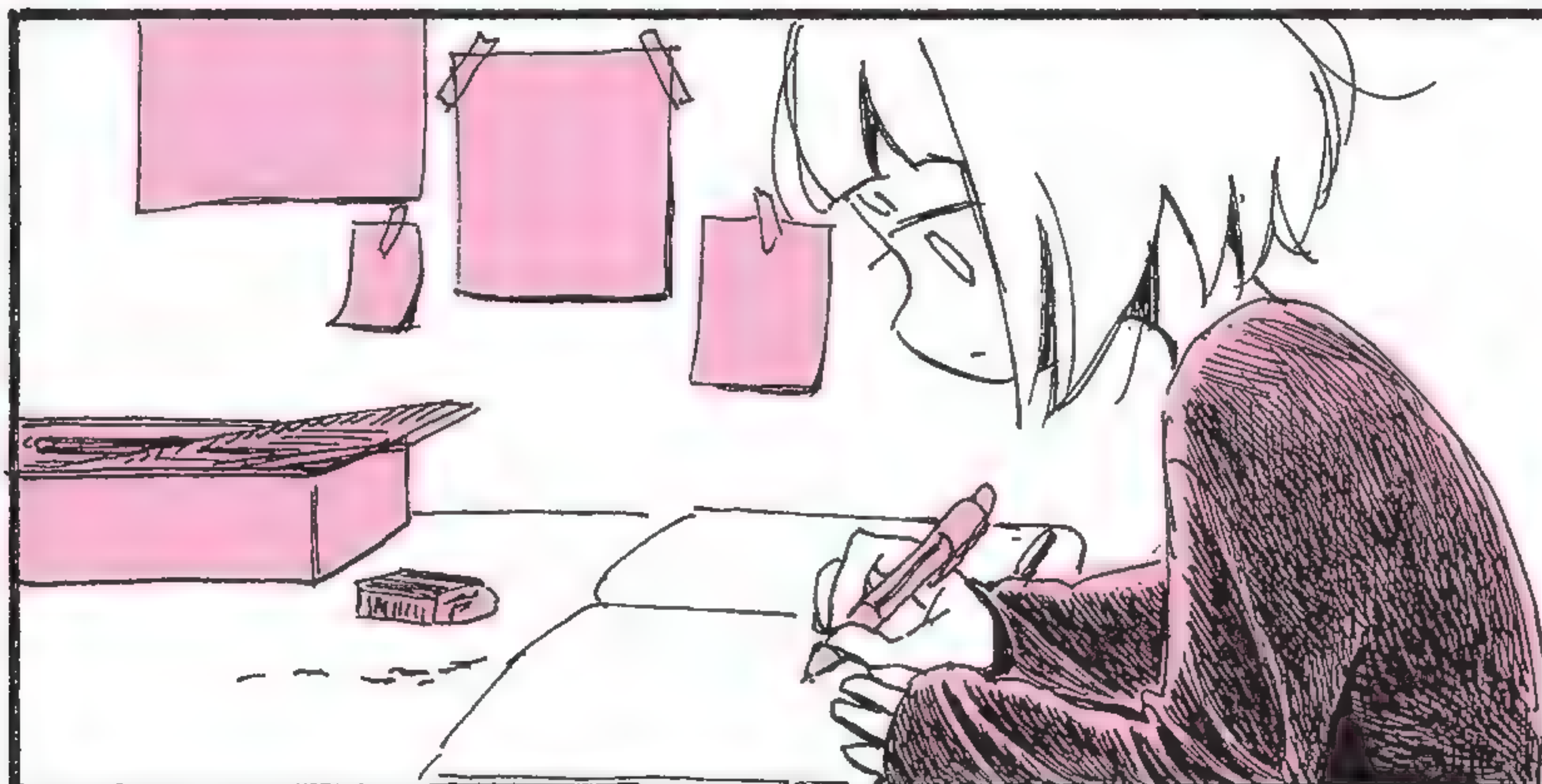


Although,
I don't
really
believe
that.

I'm going
to believe
that she
will find
happiness.



Future me,
you'll probably
be dragged back
again by the
attraction of this
house and the
attachment to
my mother.

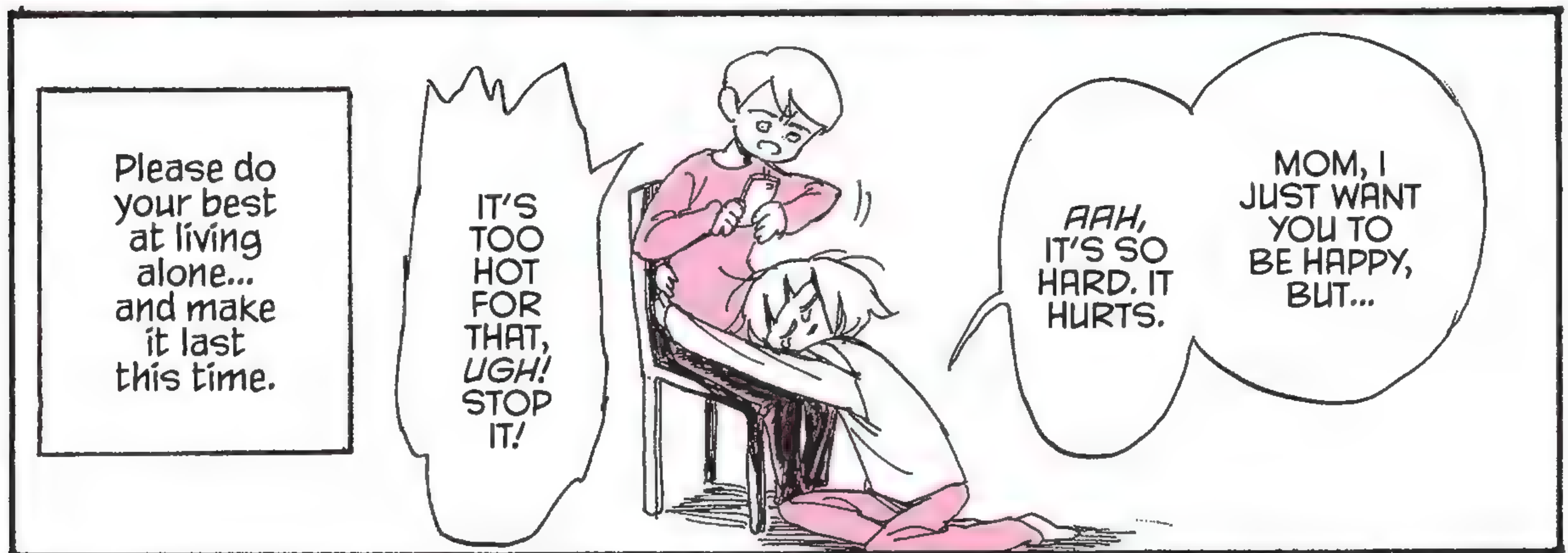
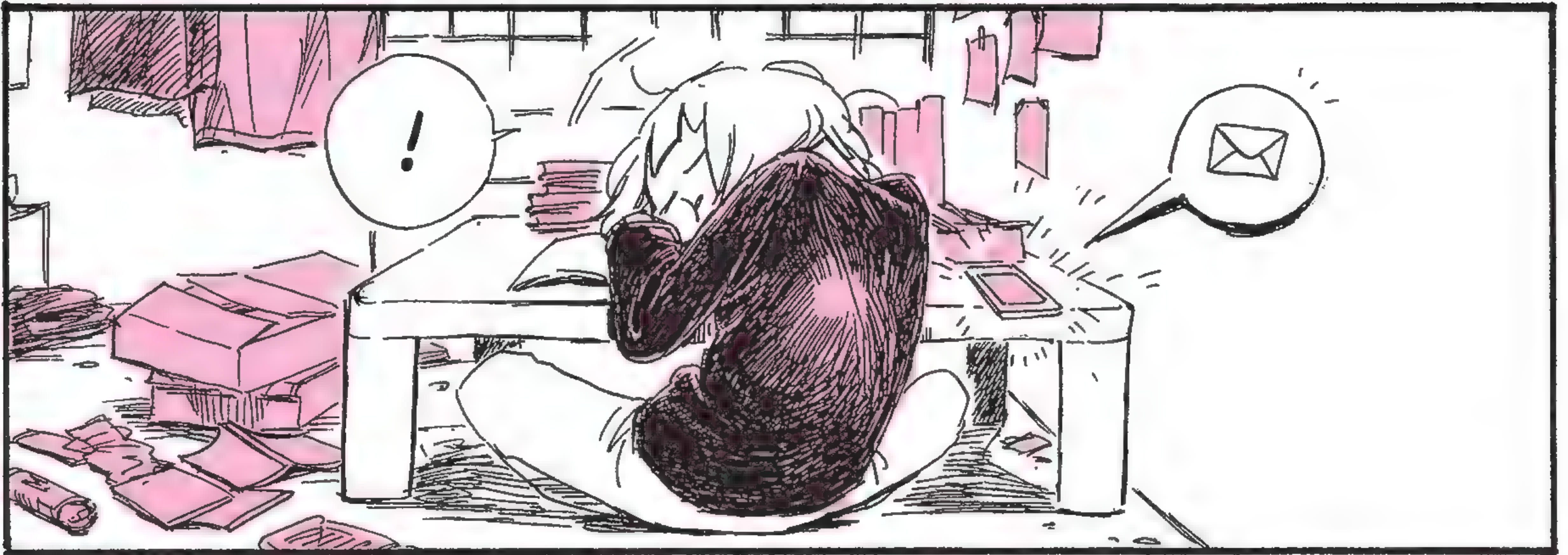


Please
think
about
that,
and
please...
fight.

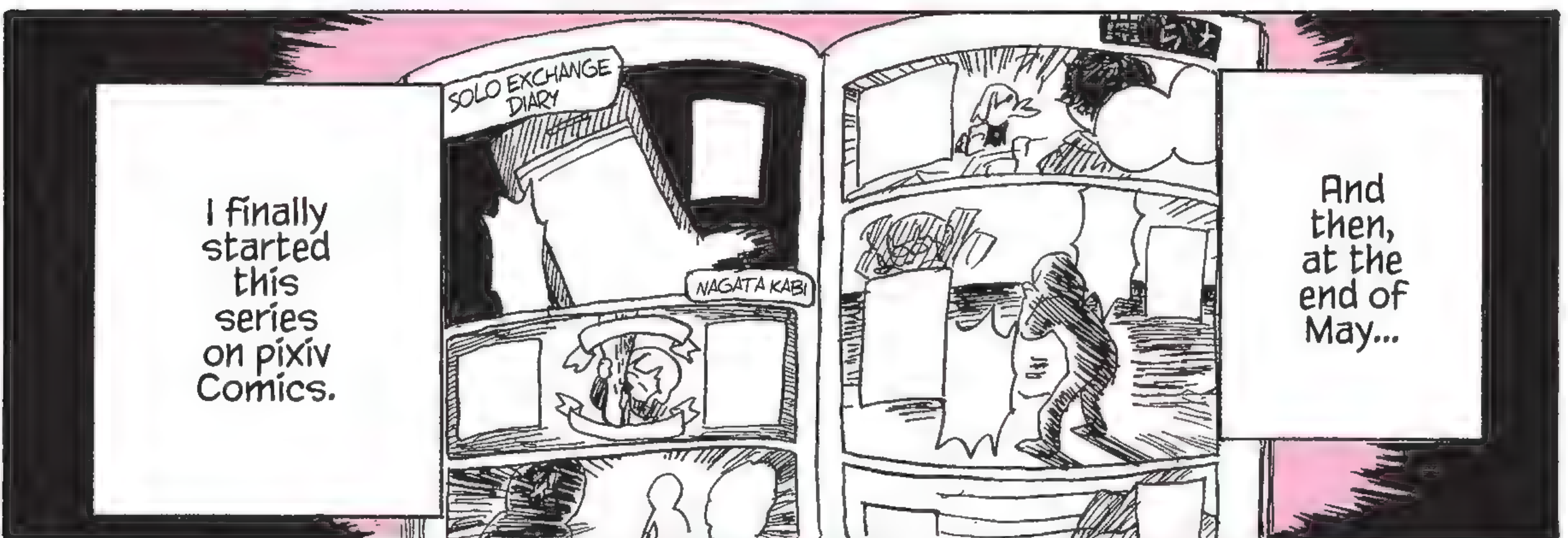
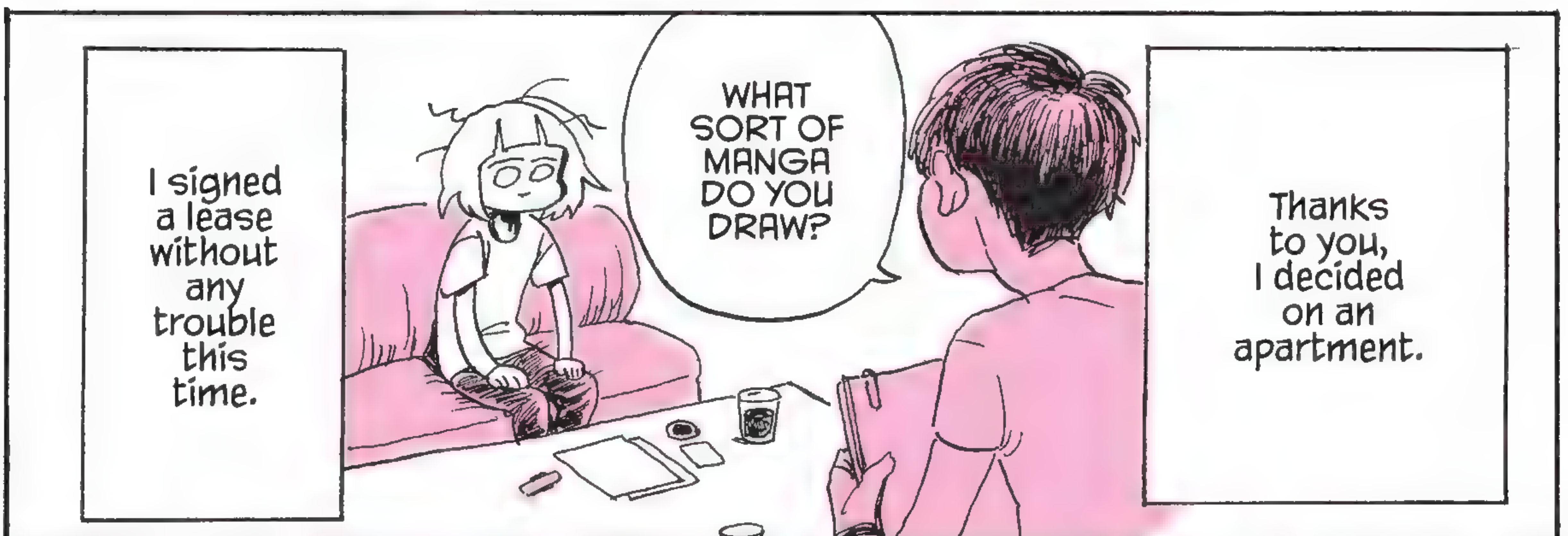


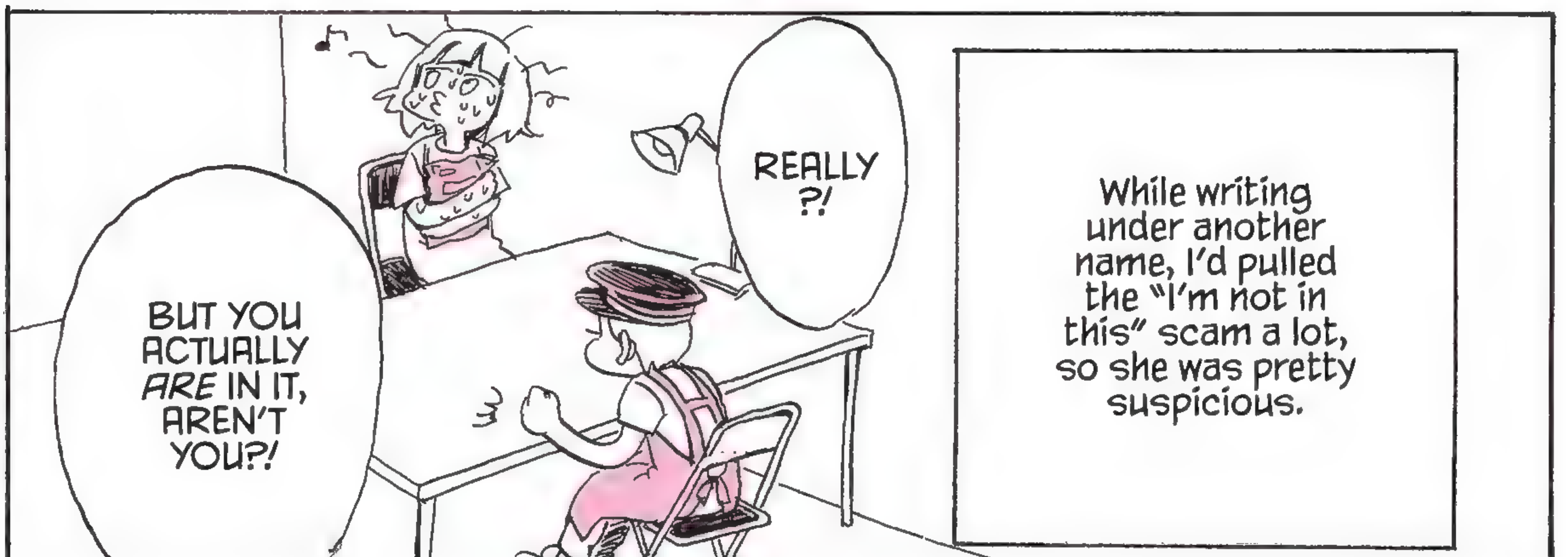
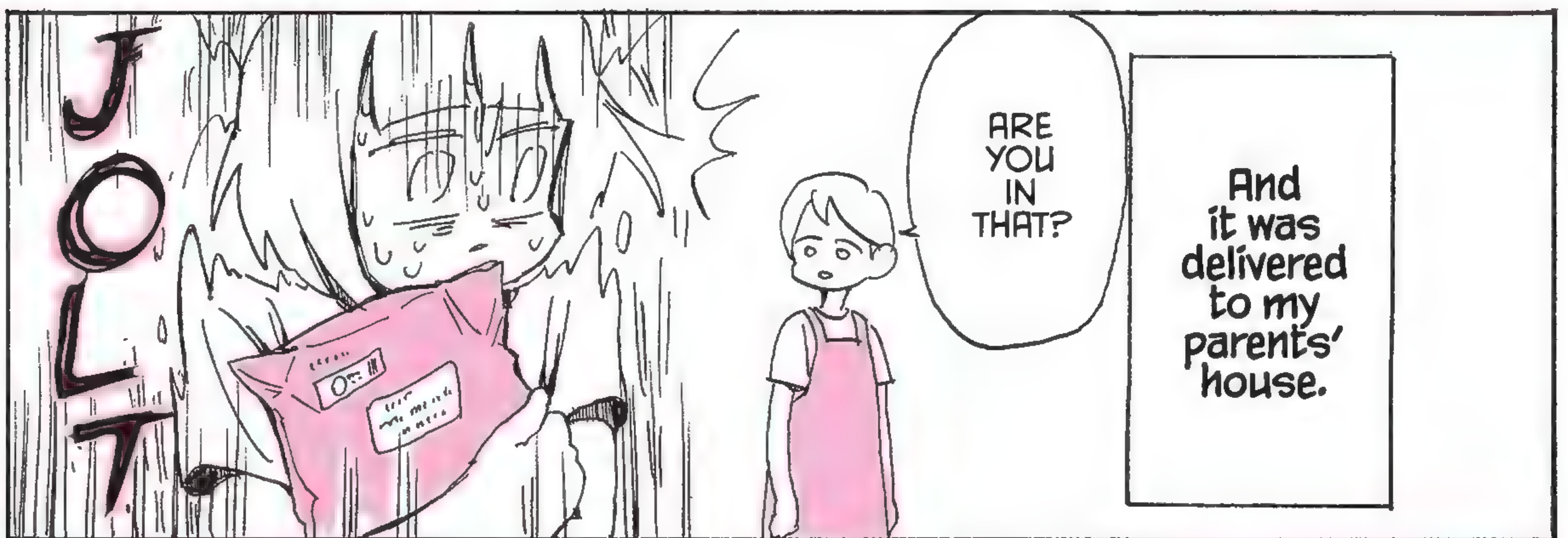
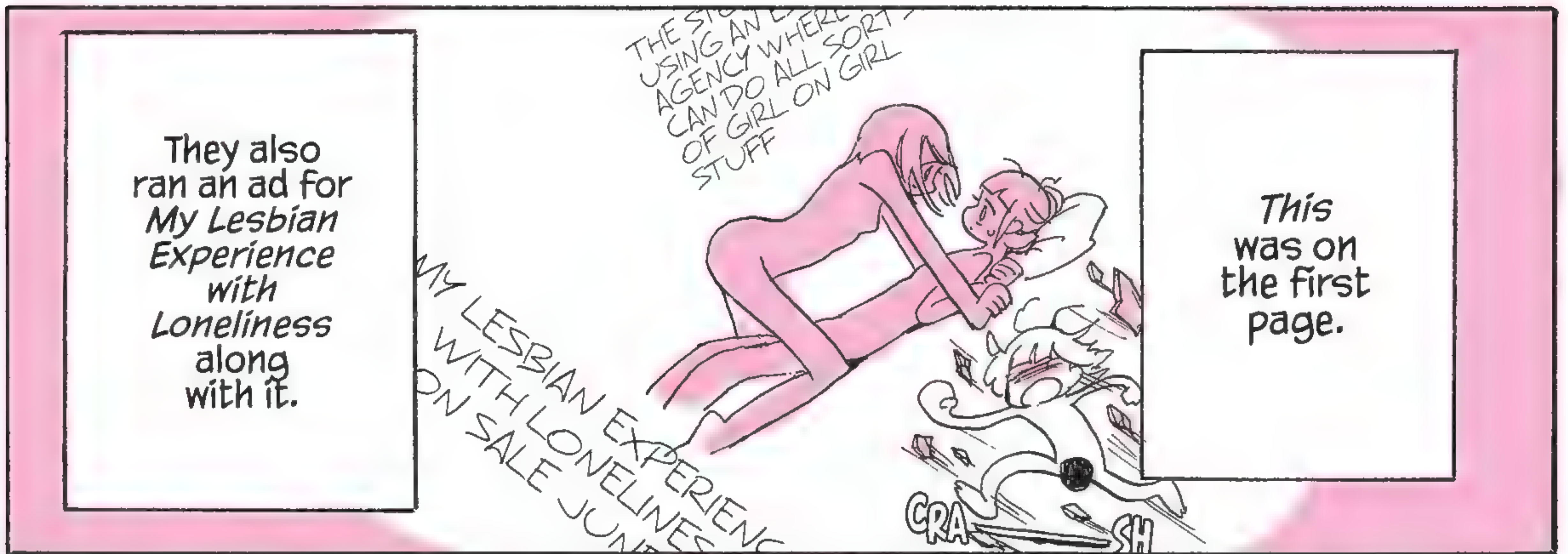
I'm sorry
to ask
you for
something so
aggravating,
but I know
you can
do it.

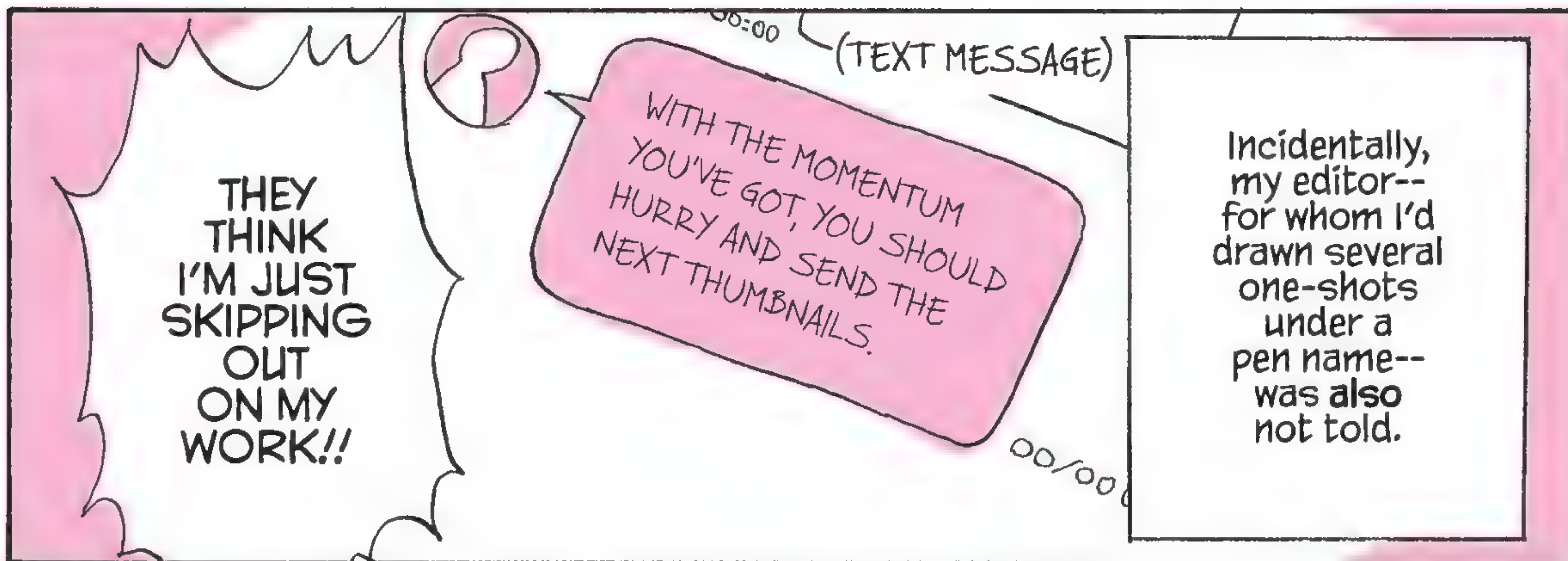
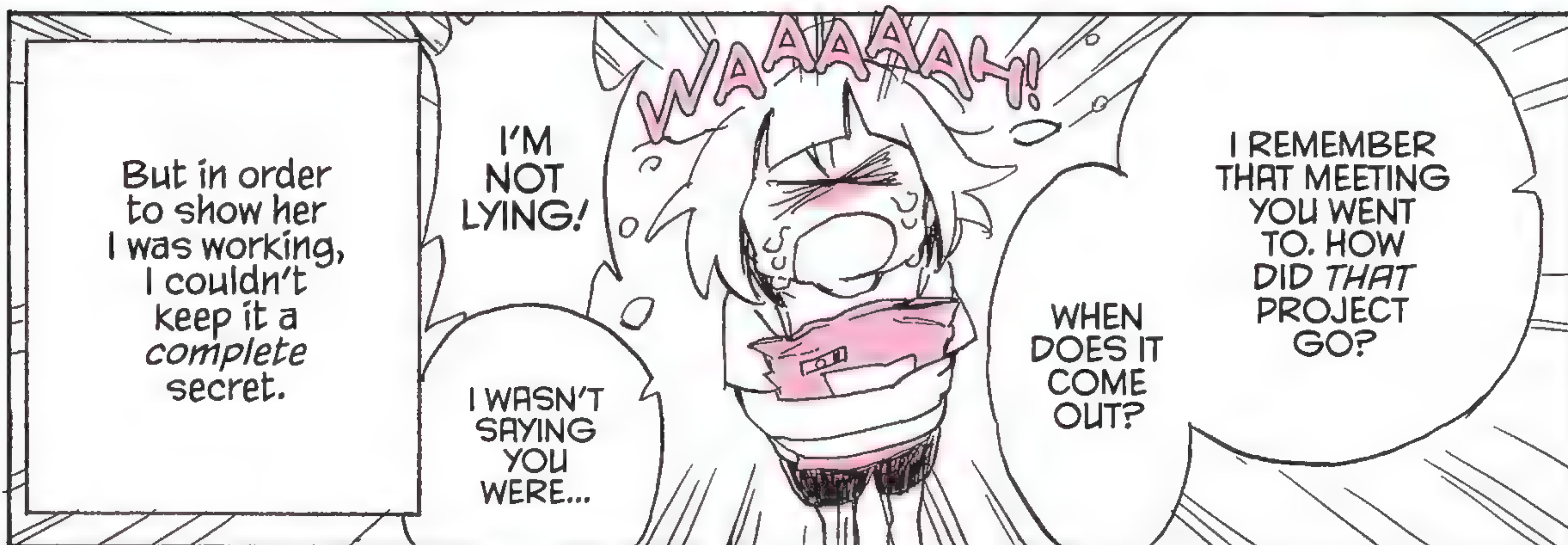
Maybe
"living"
is just
repeating
that over
and over.

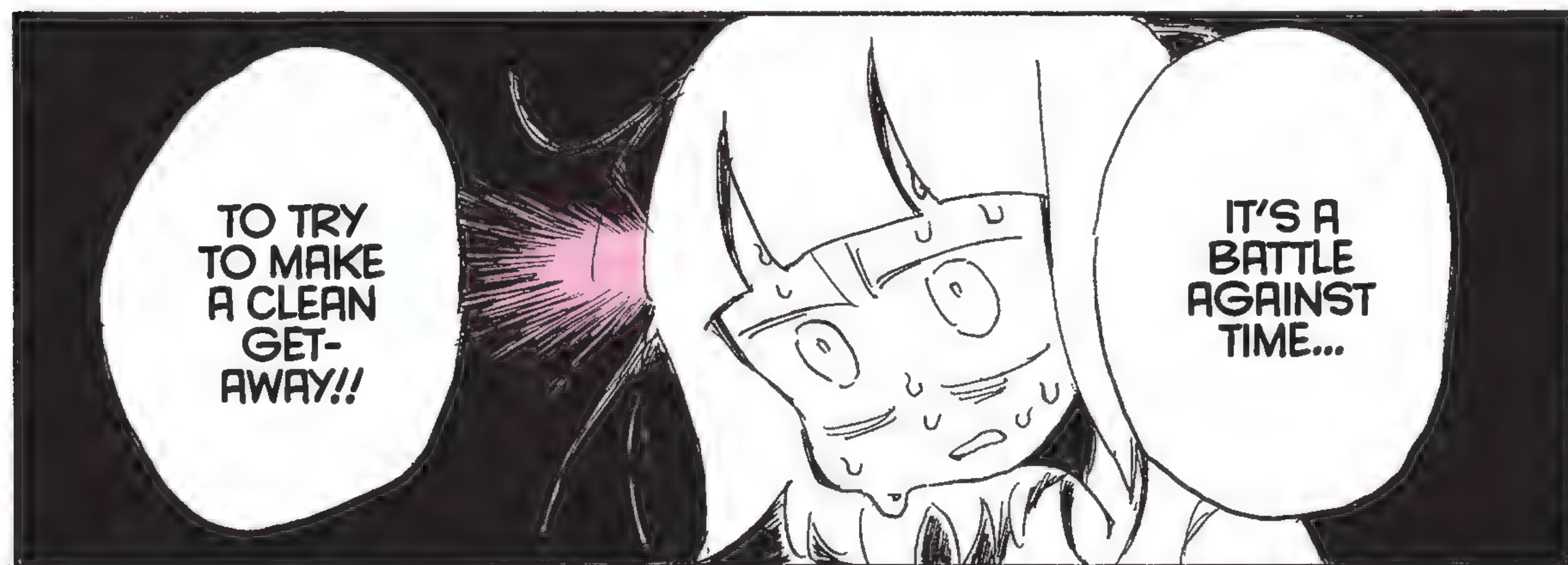
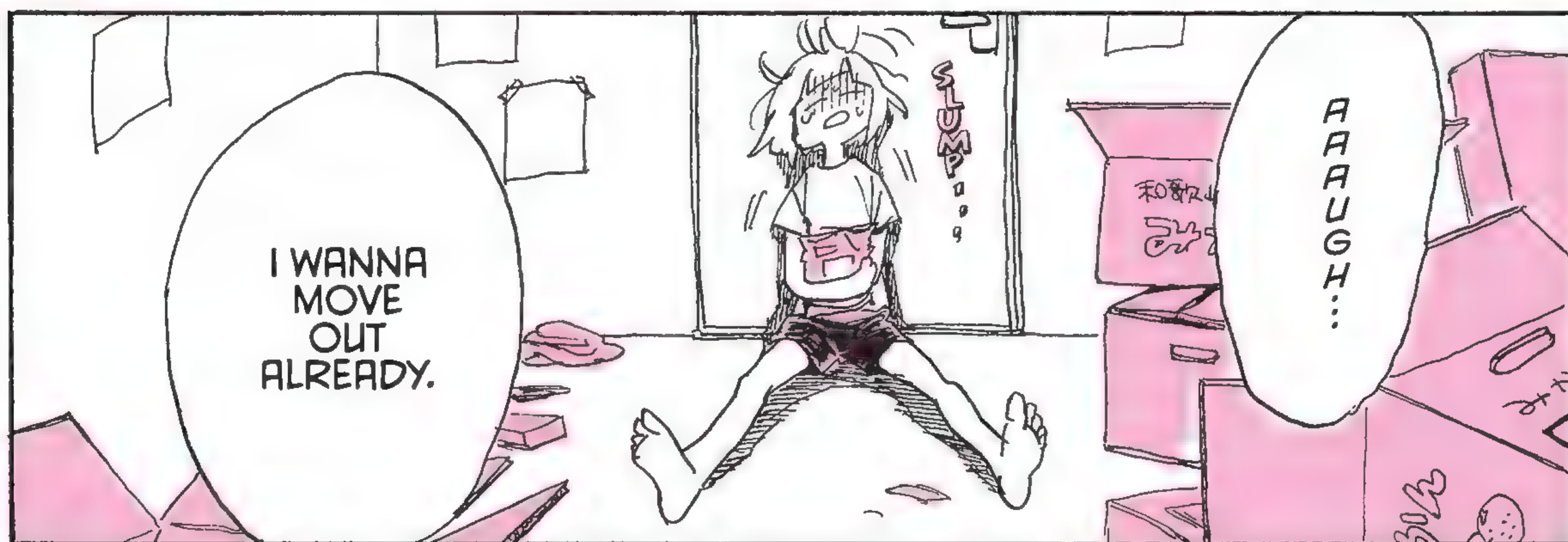
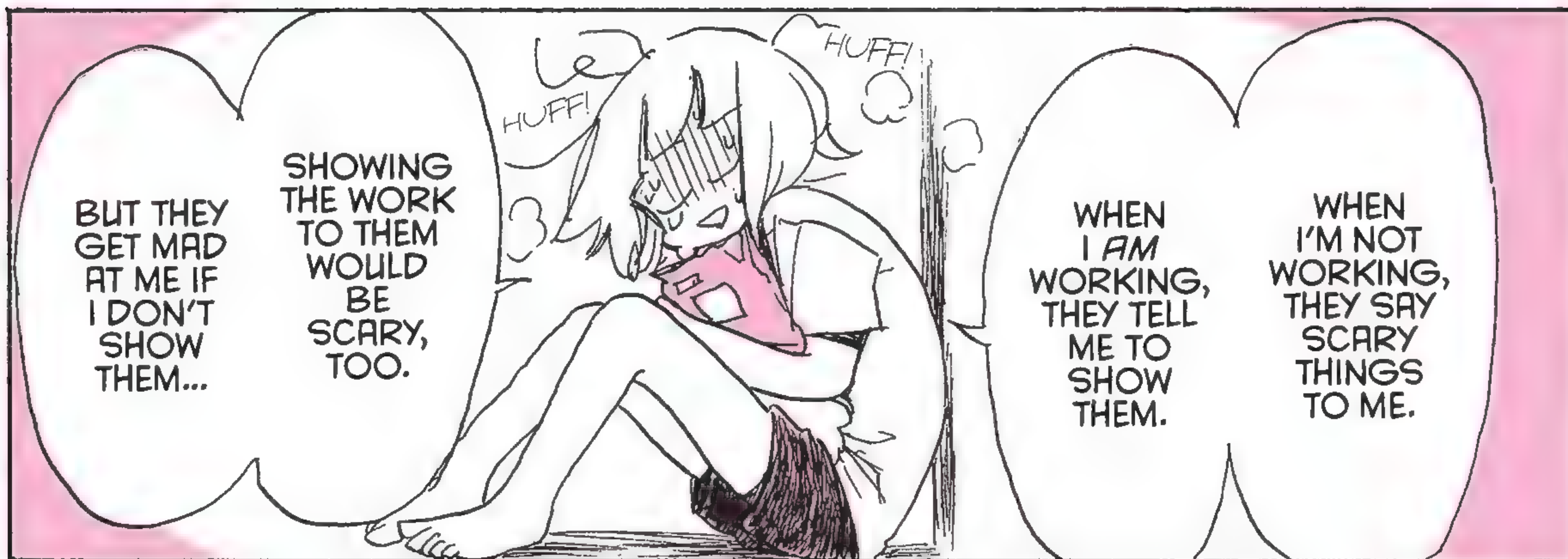


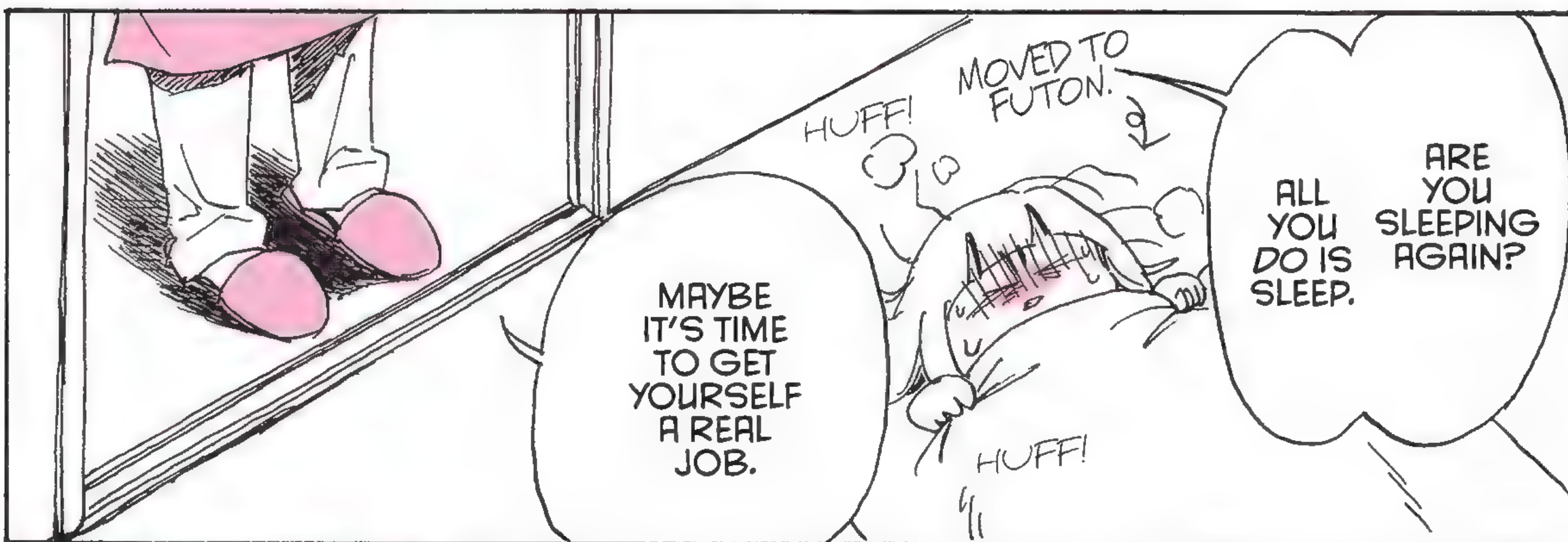
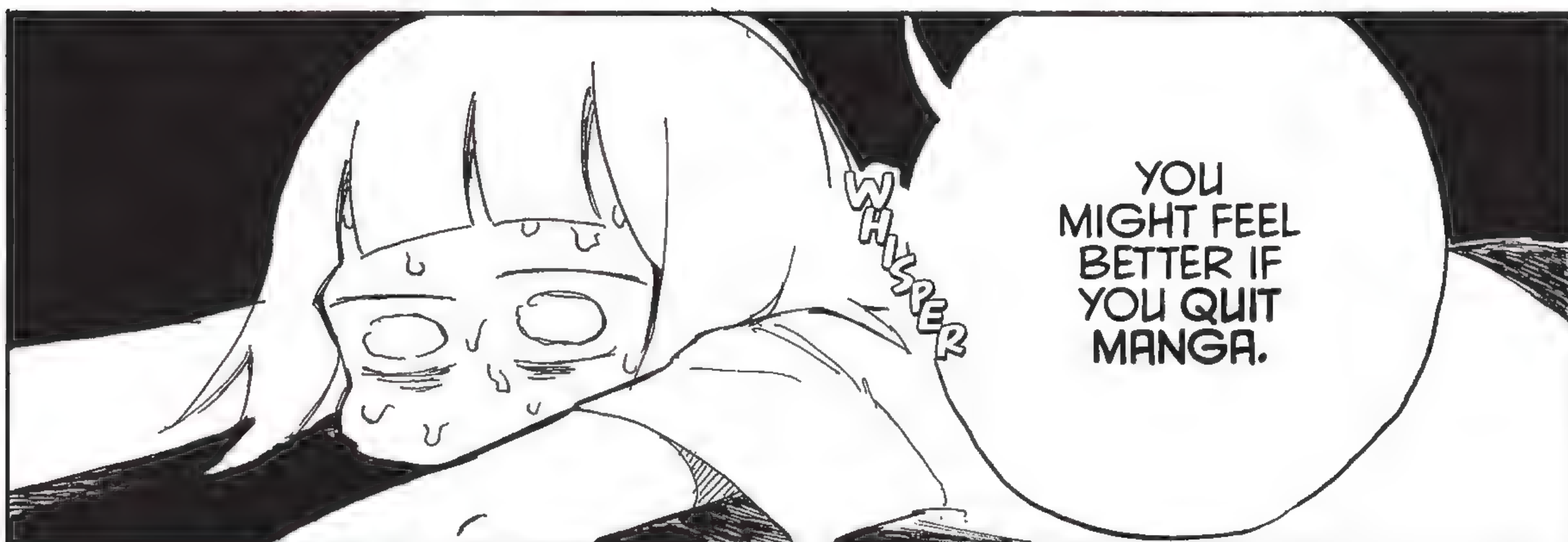
My
Solo
Exchange
Diary













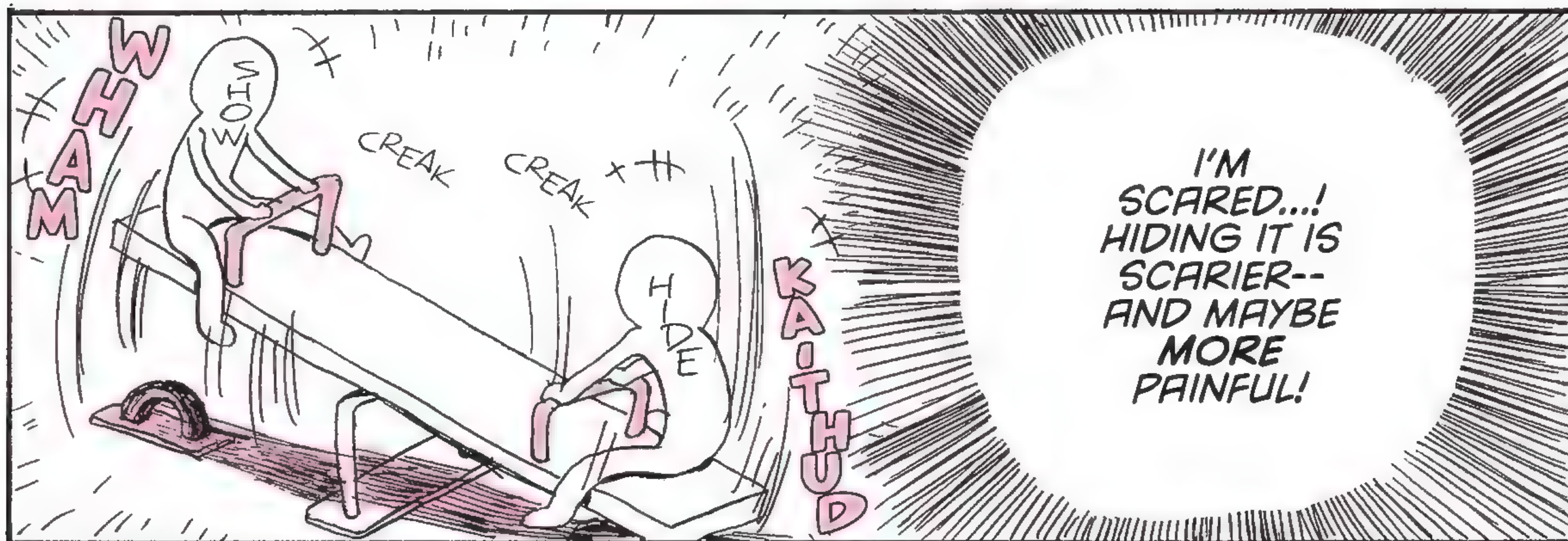
SO
SCAAARY!
I NEED TO
GET OUT OF
HEEERE!

SO...

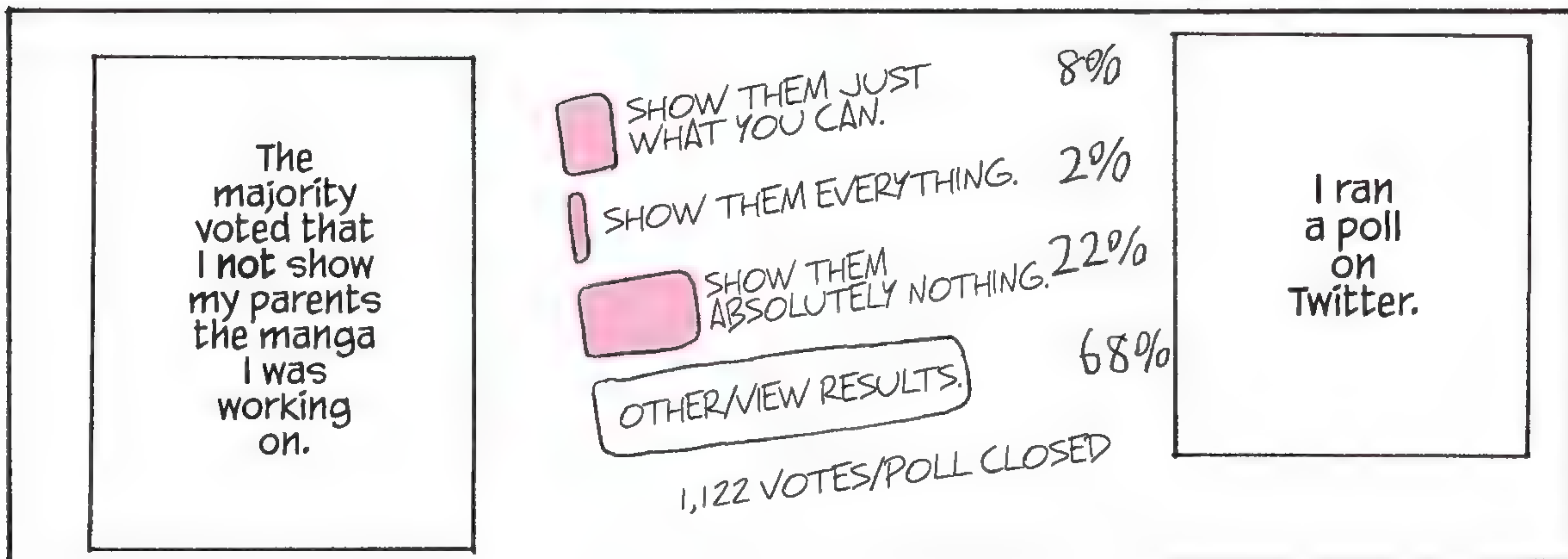


She
started
saying
the most
terrifying
stuff.

She'd
apparently
picked up on
the fact that
I was drawing
something
I had to hide
from her and
my dad.



I'M
SCARED...!
HIDING IT IS
SCARIER--
AND MAYBE
MORE
PAINFUL!



The
majority
voted that
I not show
my parents
the manga
I was
working
on.

☐ SHOW THEM JUST
WHAT YOU CAN. 8%

☐ SHOW THEM EVERYTHING. 2%

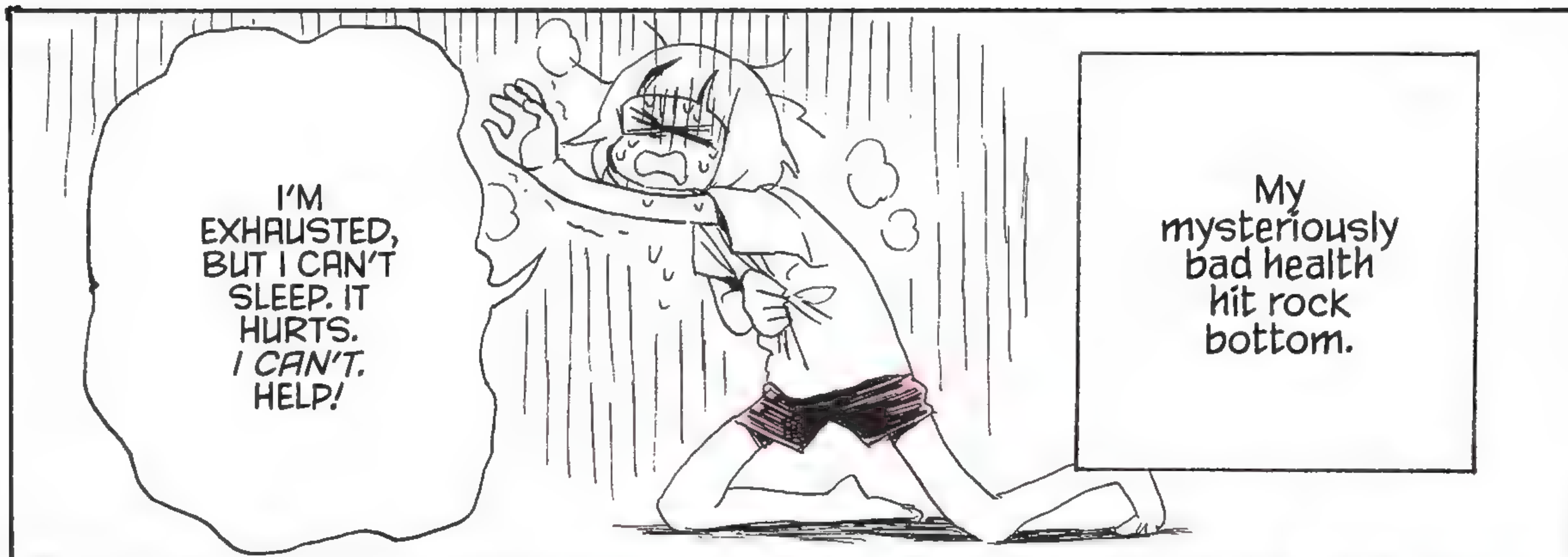
☐ SHOW THEM
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. 22%

☐ OTHER/VIEW RESULTS. 68%

1,122 VOTES/POLL CLOSED

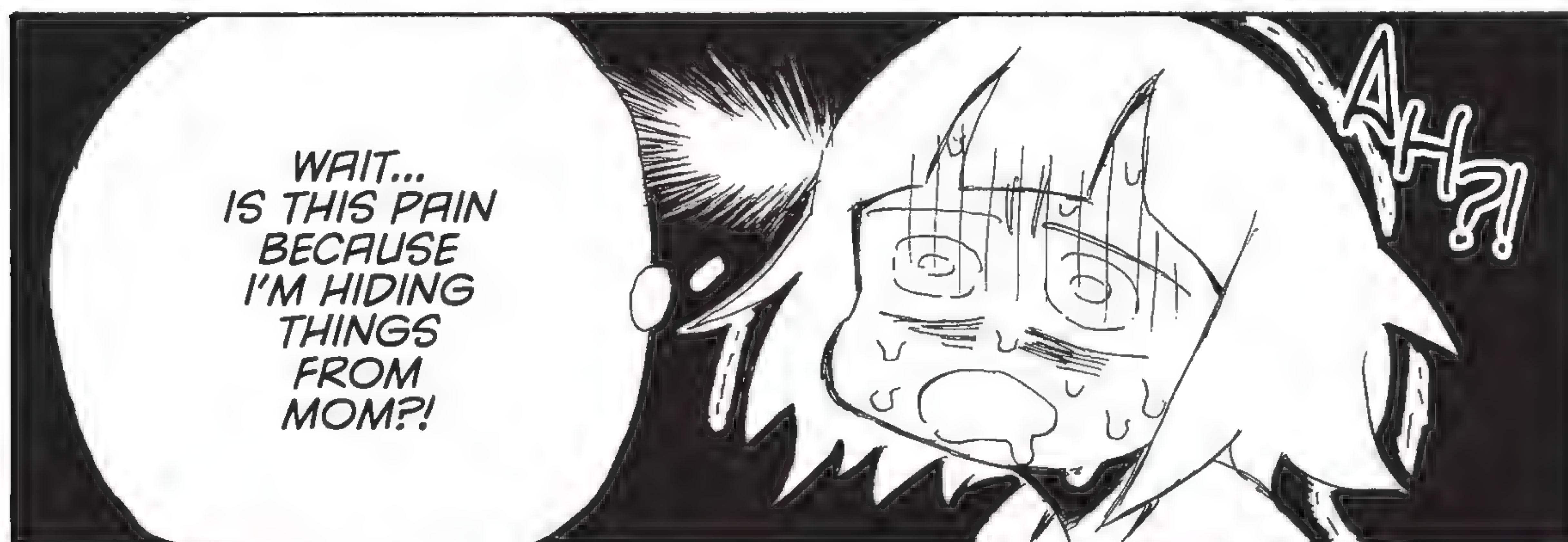
I ran
a poll
on
Twitter.





I'M
EXHAUSTED,
BUT I CAN'T
SLEEP. IT
HURTS.
I CAN'T.
HELP!

My
mysteriously
bad health
hit rock
bottom.



WAIT...
IS THIS PAIN
BECAUSE
I'M HIDING
THINGS
FROM
MOM?!

AH?!



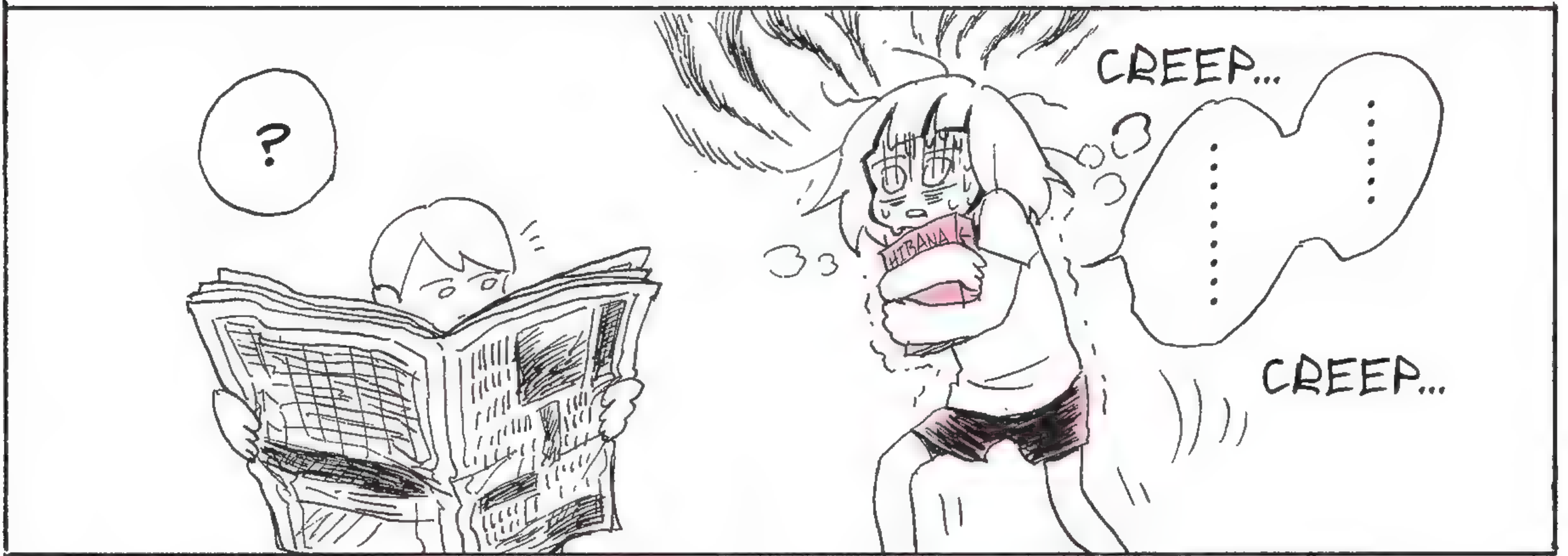
IT
HURTS.

I
WANNA
FEEL
BETTER.



I CAN
TOTALLY
DO
THIS!!

NO, THIS IS
ACTUALLY
SOMETHING TO
WRITE ABOUT.
I SHOULD BE
SHOWING HER!
IT'S NOT WORTH
MY MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL
HEALTH!!



but I feel
a brake being
pulled, like
I'm driving
straight into
danger.



I know in
theory that
this will be
a topic to
write
about...

IT'S THAT
BAD?!
WHY IS
THIS SO
IMPOSSIBLE
...?!

WHY
?!
?

IT'S
NO USE!
I CAN'T!!

AND DIS-
GRACING
YOUR
PARENTS.

YOU'RE
EMBAR-
RASSING
THIS
FAMILY...

...

DON'T BE
ASLEEP
EVERY TIME
I LOOK
AT YOU.

YOU'RE
SLEEPING
AGAIN?

TUP TUP TUP TUP TUP

SLAM

I wanted
her to
love me,
no matter
what
I did.



I wanted
my mom to
say I was
good just
the way
I was.

that
lingering
sense of
danger
had been
slamming
on my
brakes.



But
ever since
I'd realized
that she
really wasn't
like that...

I'M
SORRY FOR
CONSTANTLY
SAYING
THAT YOU'RE
PATHETIC, OR
EMBARRASSING...

"I'M
EMBAR-
RASSED
WHERE-
EVER
SHE
SHOWS
UP."

MY
ABUSIVE
WORDS

"PATHETIC."

"I WOULDN'T
HAVE ANYTHING
TO DO WITH
HER IF SHE
WASN'T MY
MOTHER."

I DID THIS
TO HER, TOO.
I ALWAYS
EXPECTED
MORE FROM
MY MOM.

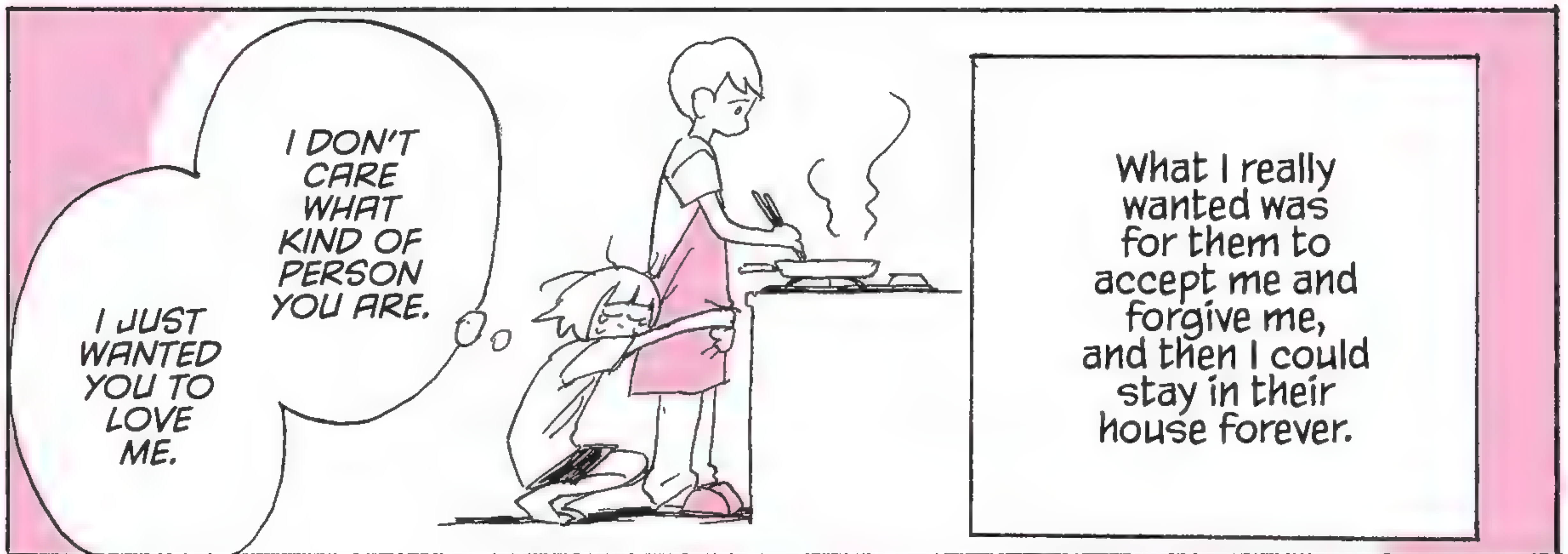
NGH!
NNGH!

BUT IF
THEY'RE NOT
GONNA
ACCEPT THE
CURRENT
ME WHEN I'M
LIVING WITH
THEM, THEN
I'M JUST
ALONE.



I'M SO
LONELY.

AAAAH...
I DON'T
WANNA
GO.

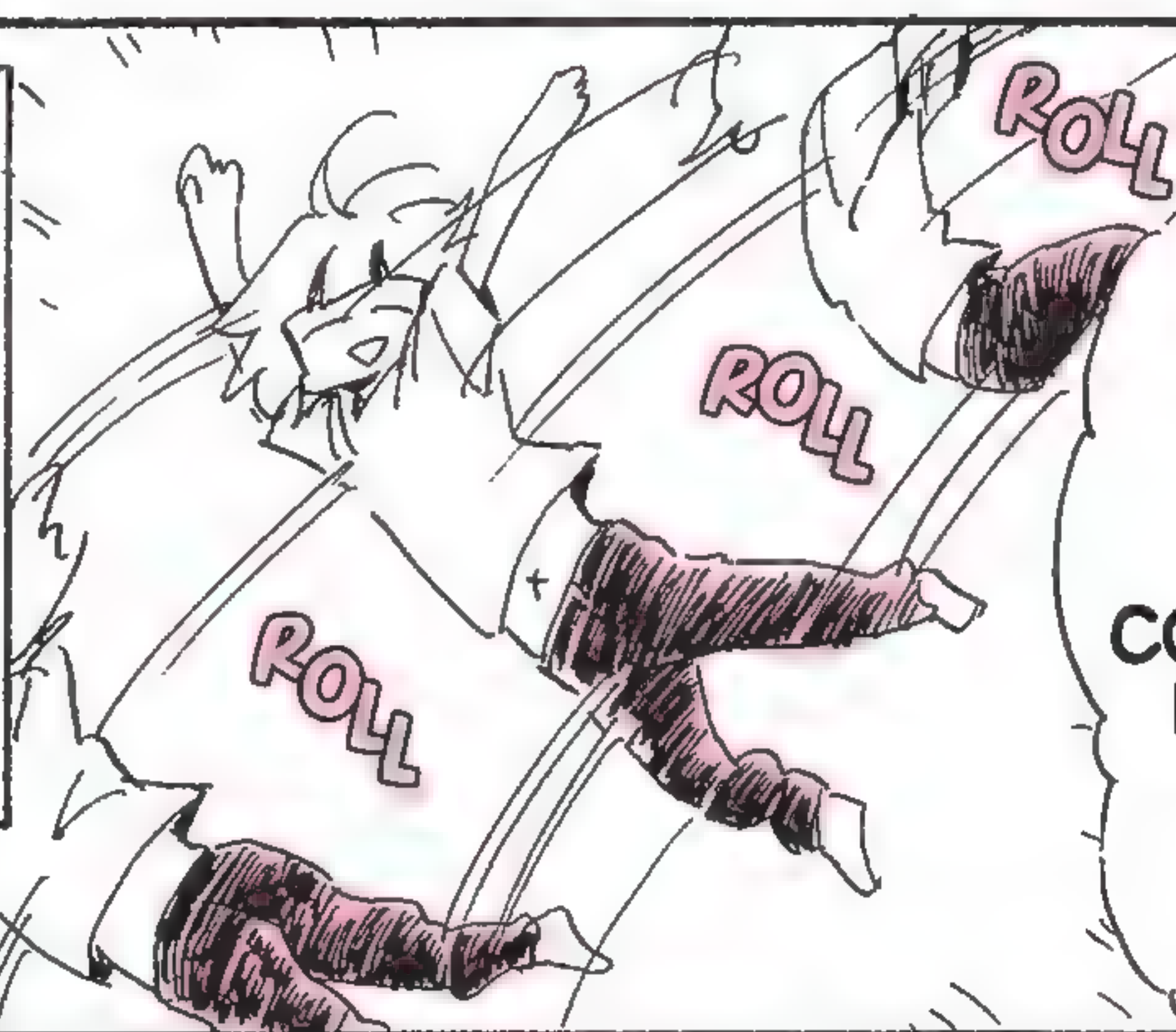


and as
motivation to
stay there,
I picked a
stylish place
where the
rent was on
the high side.



Because
I wanted
to be a
person who
could use her
own money
to live
nicely...

Now, just
work hard
to pay
your rent!
It's all
on you,
future me!!



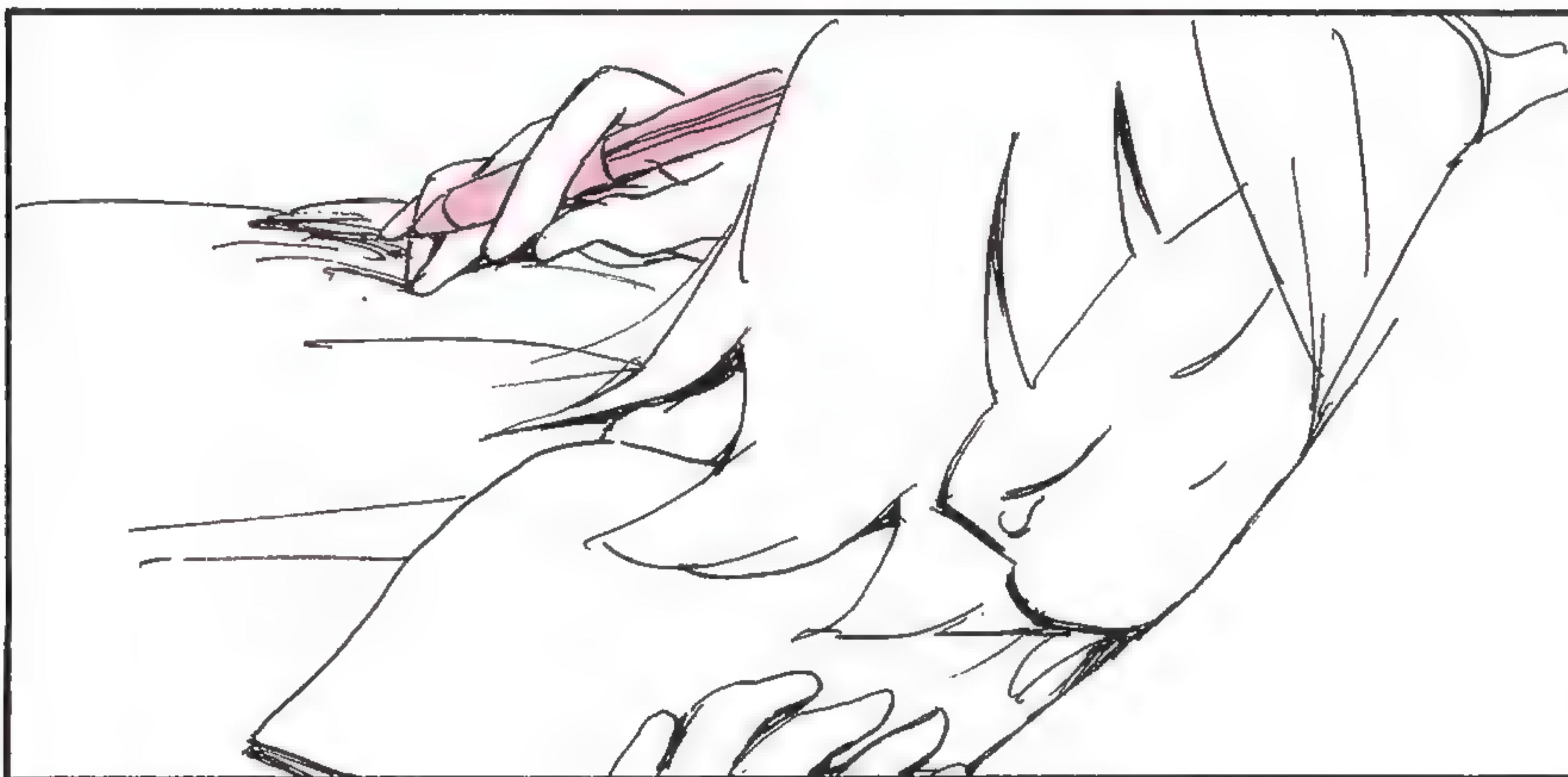
SO
COMFORT-
ABLE~!!

ALLLLL I
HAVE TO
WORRY
ABOUT
IS
RENT!

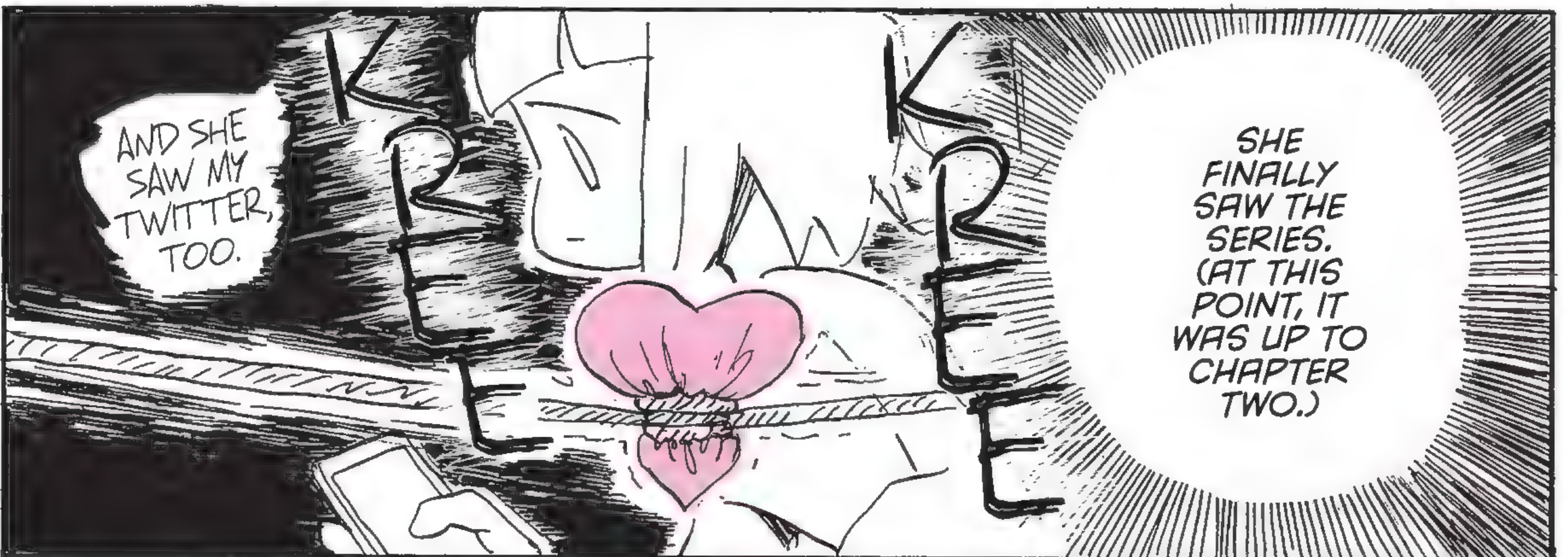
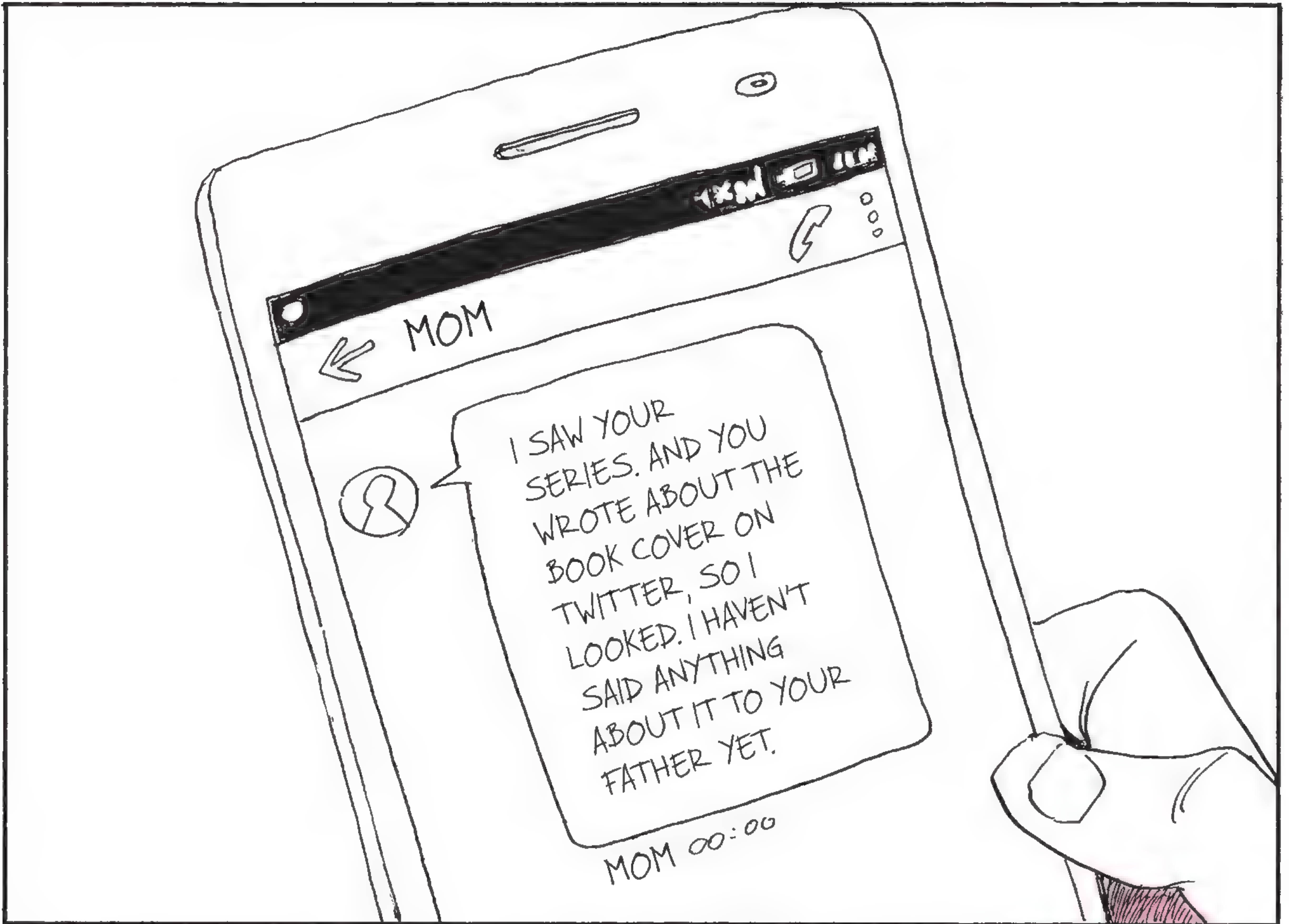
And
please
tell me
one
thing,
future
me...

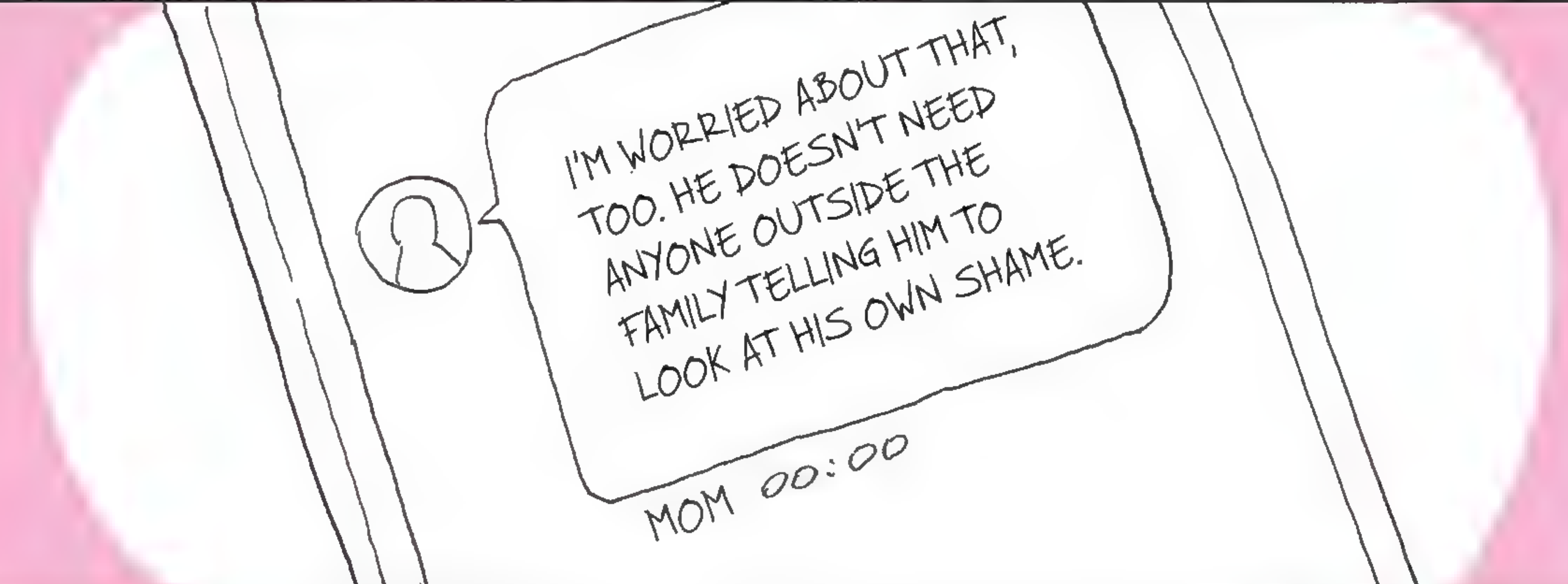
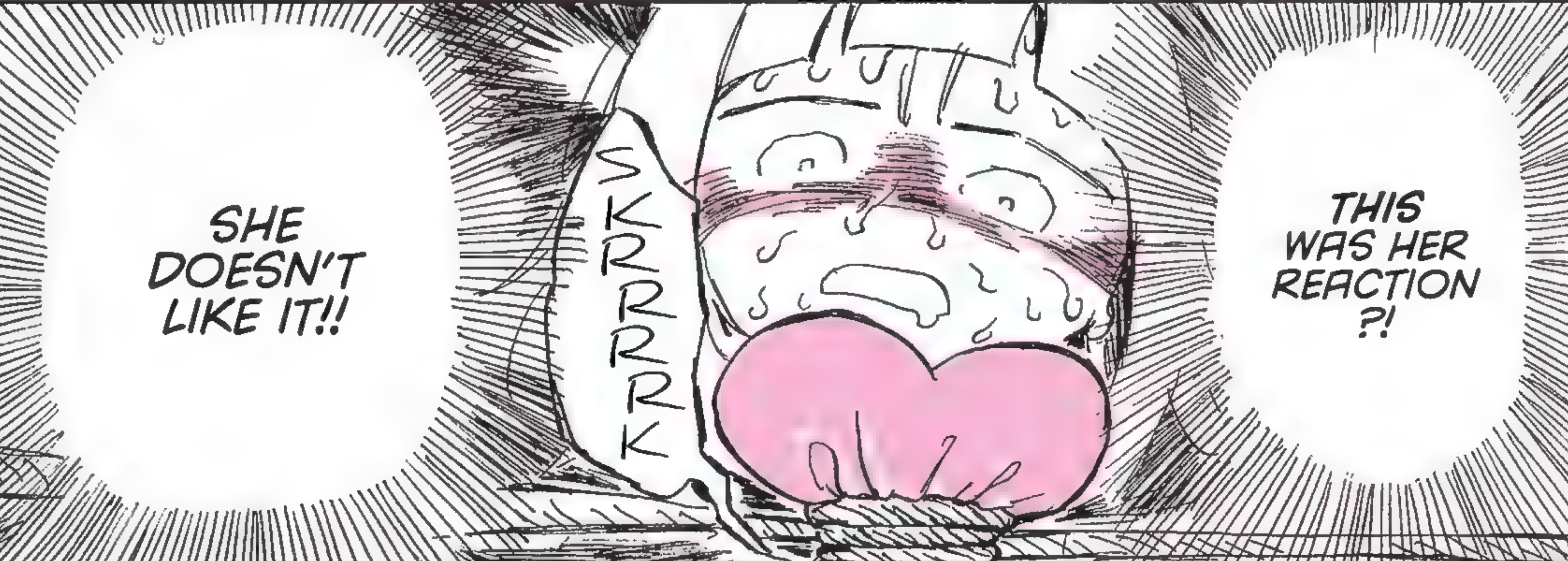
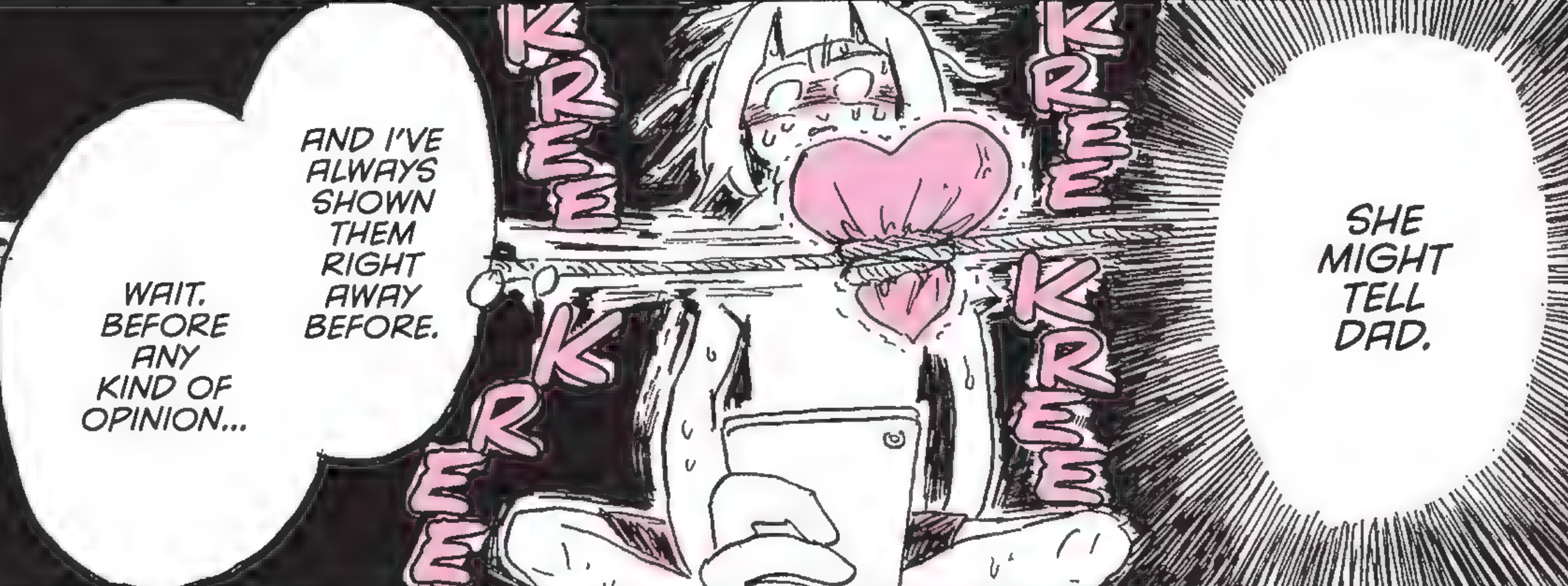


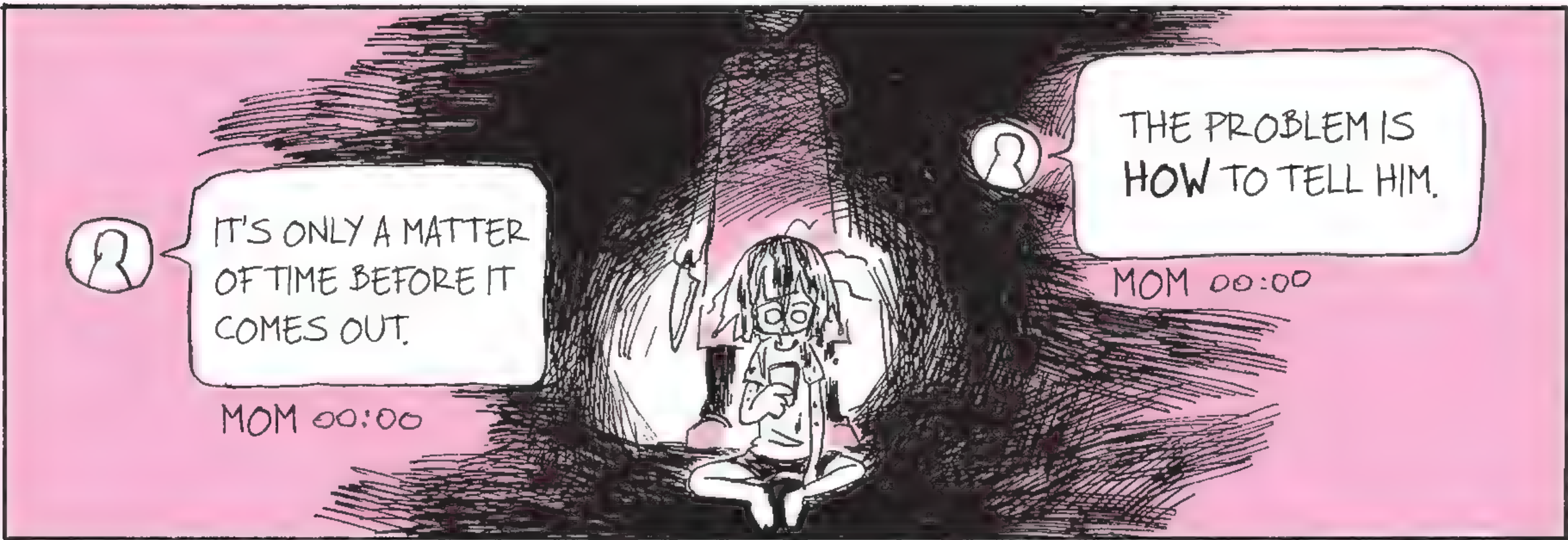
This way,
I can get through
the sales of the
book and the series
without fear!
Be grateful to
me for that.



Are
you
happy
right
now?

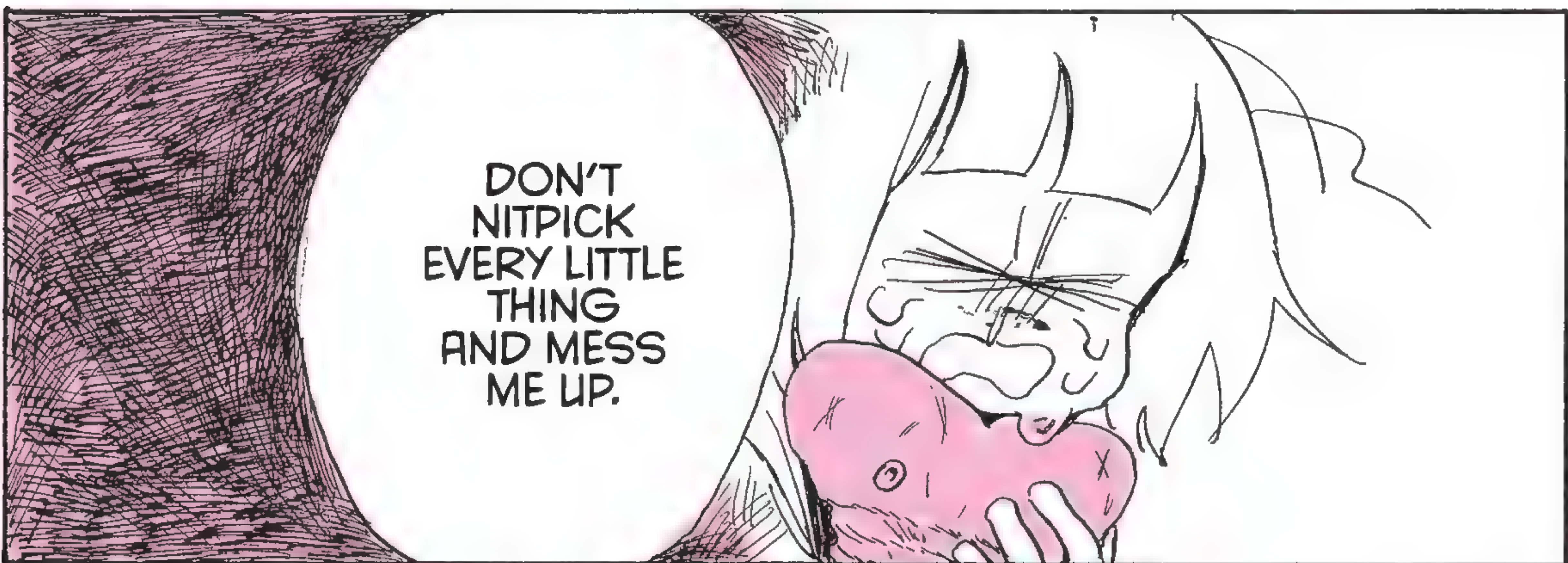
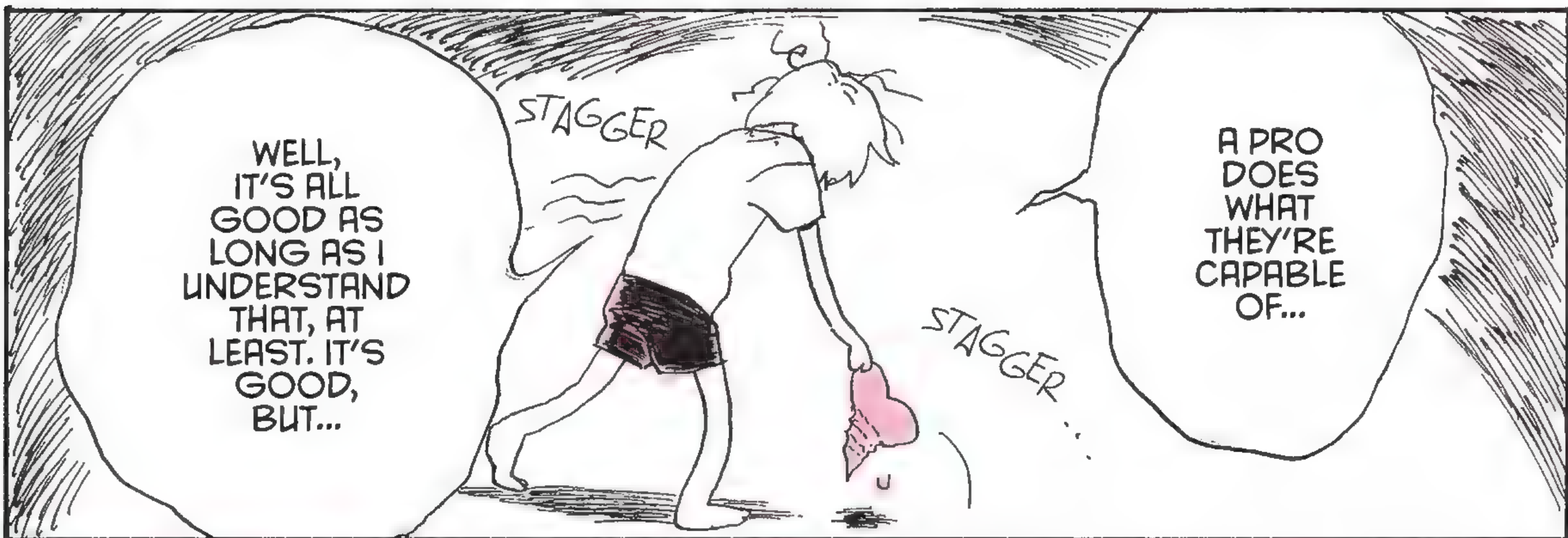
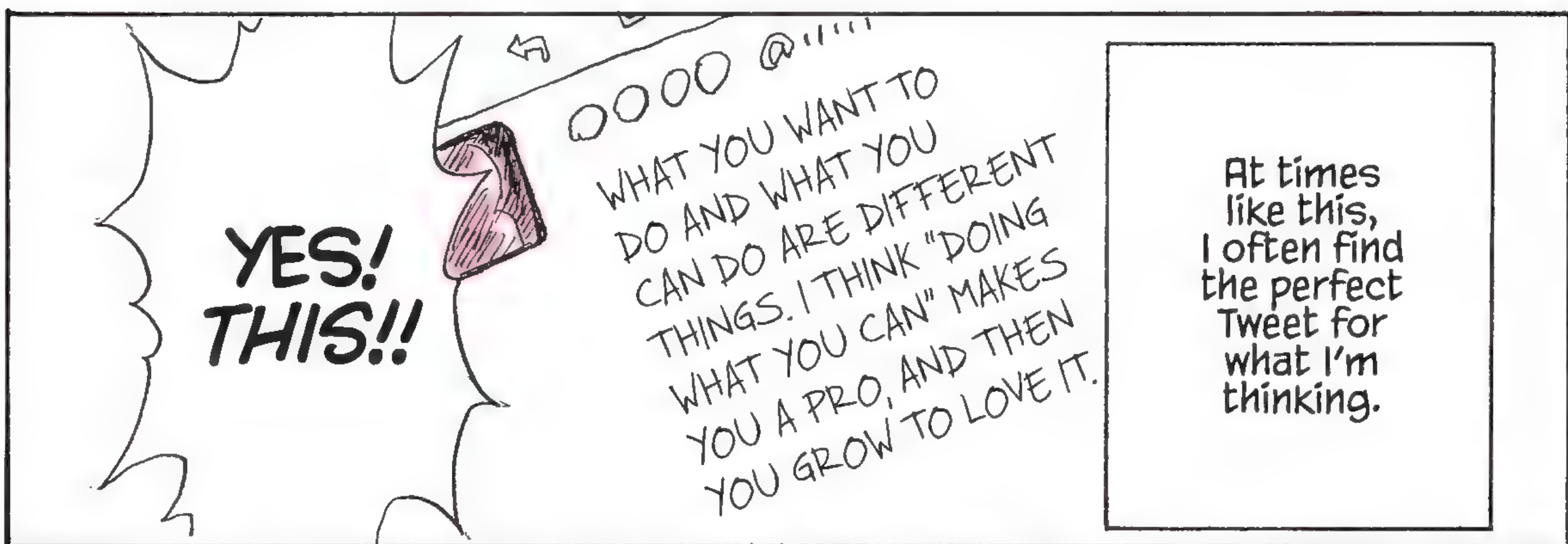
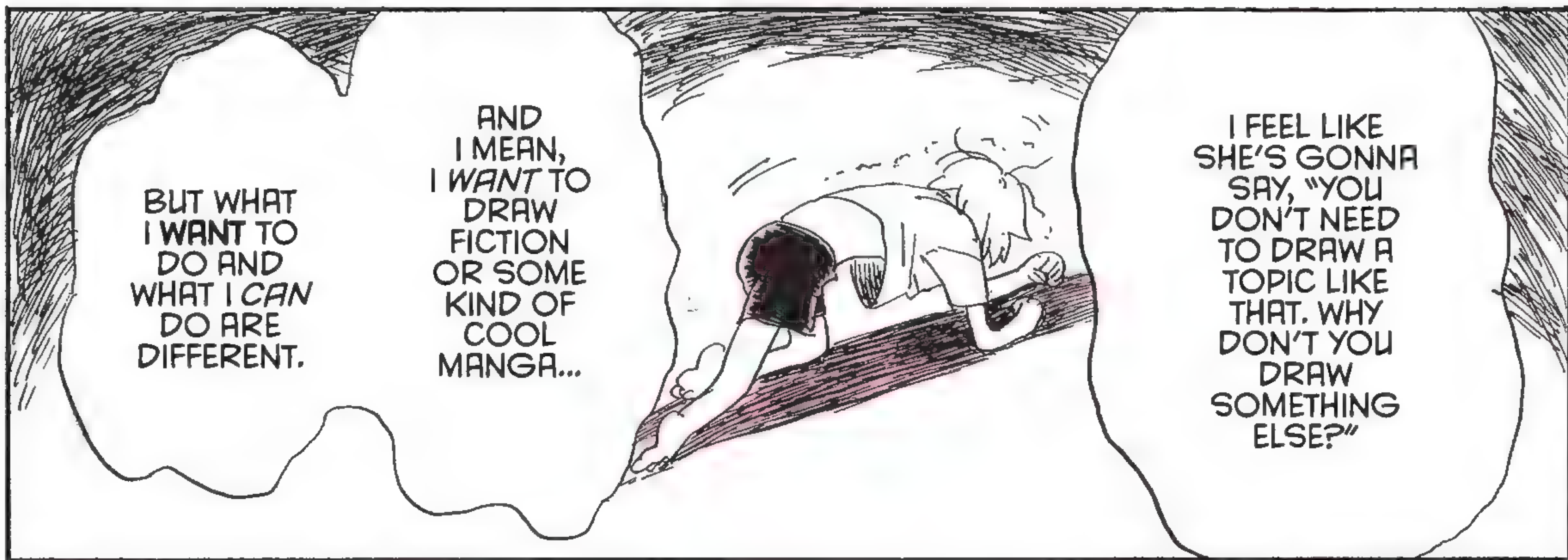


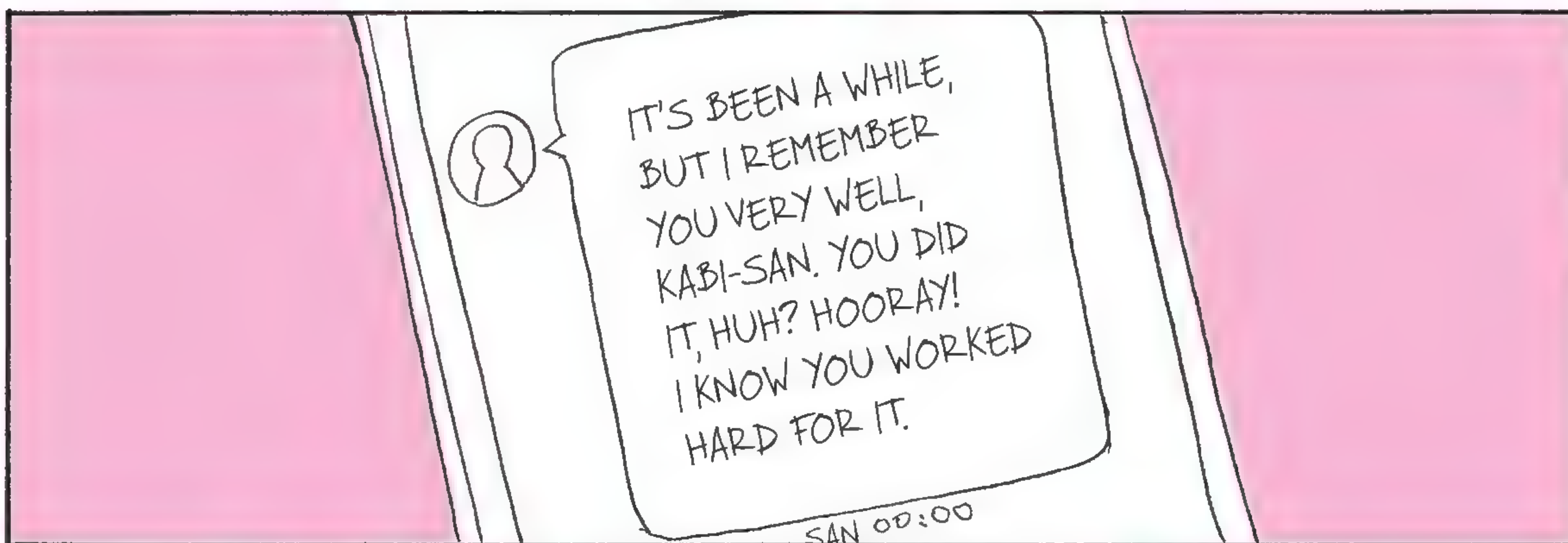


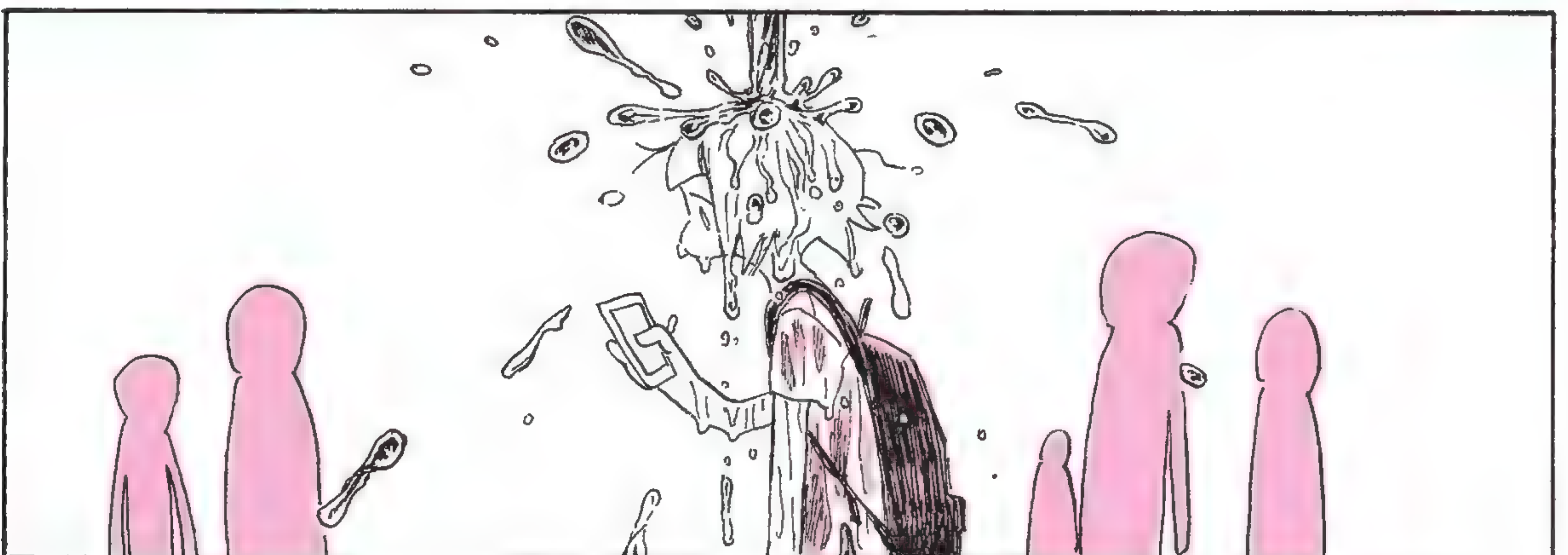
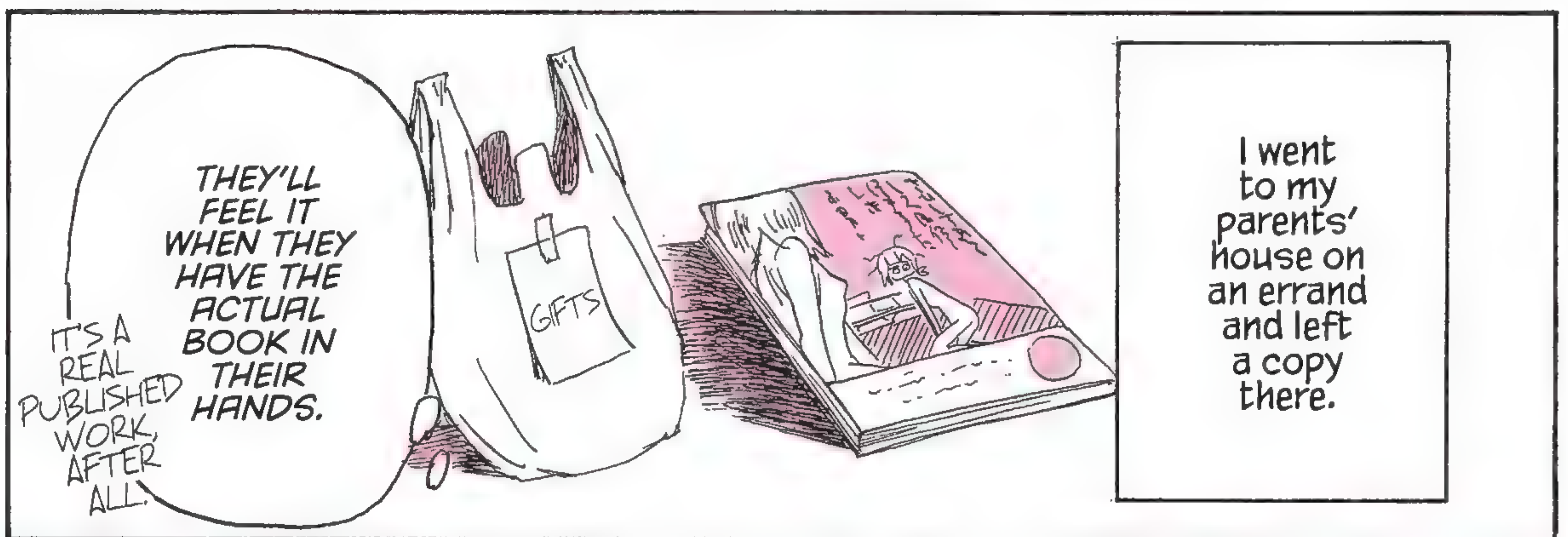


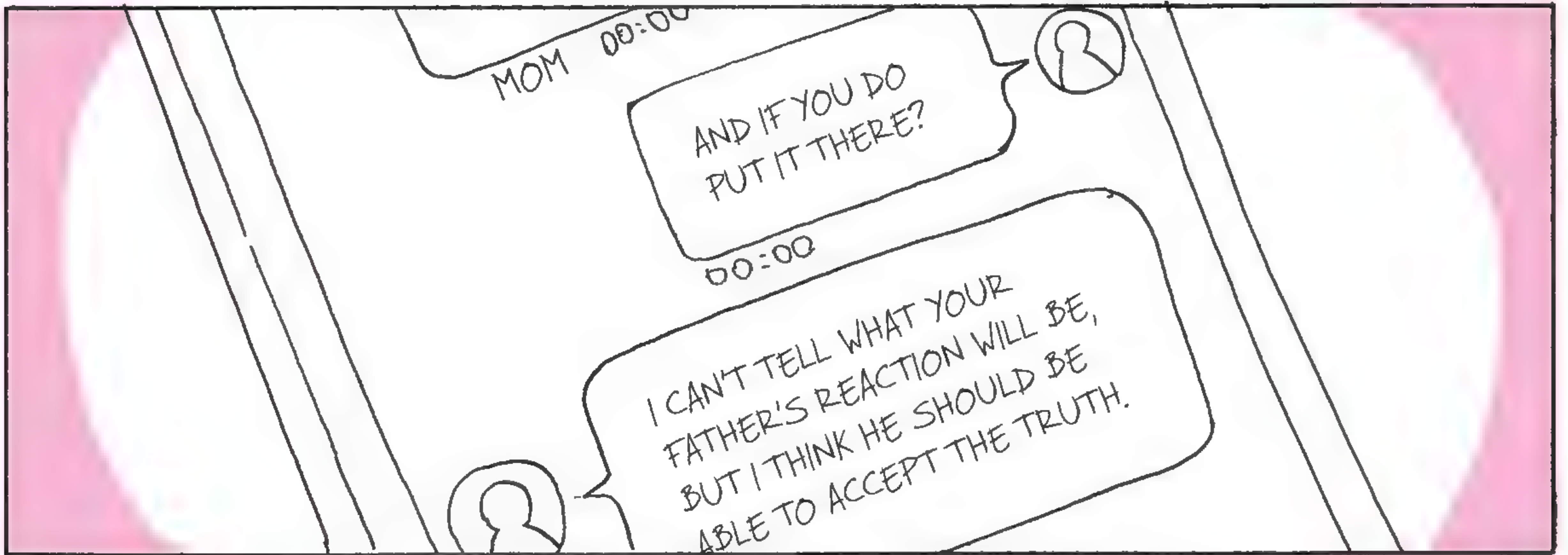


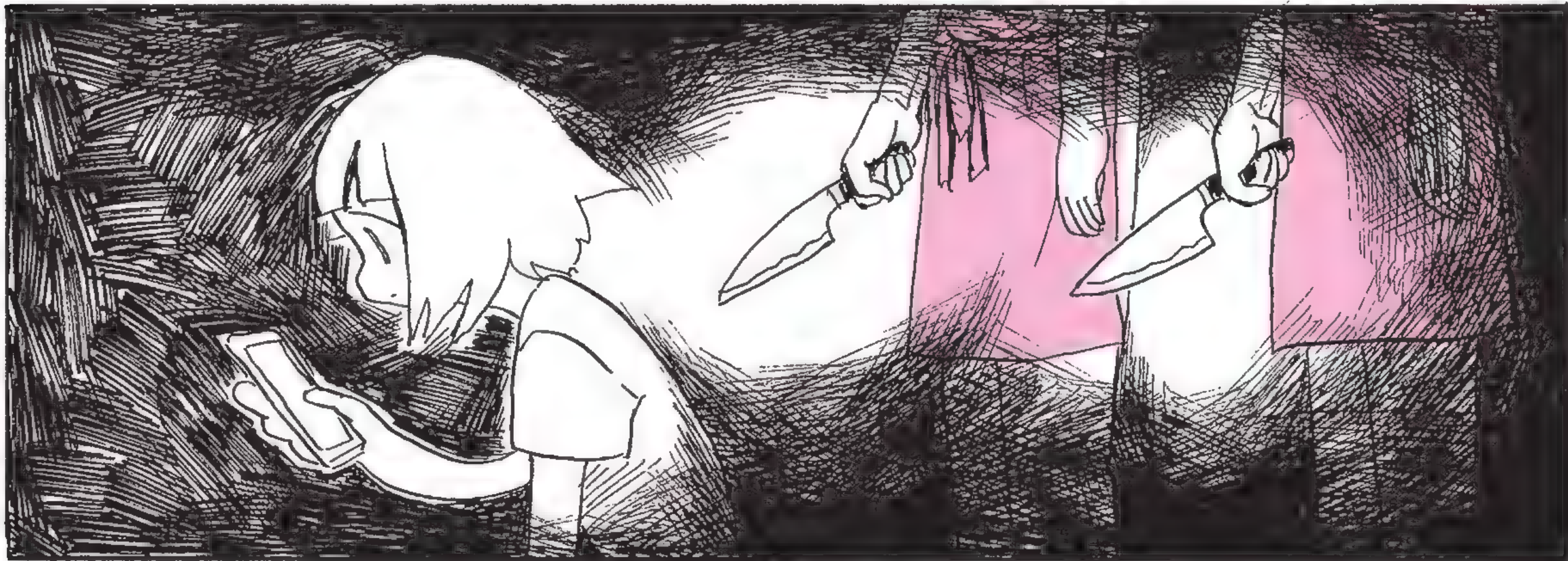


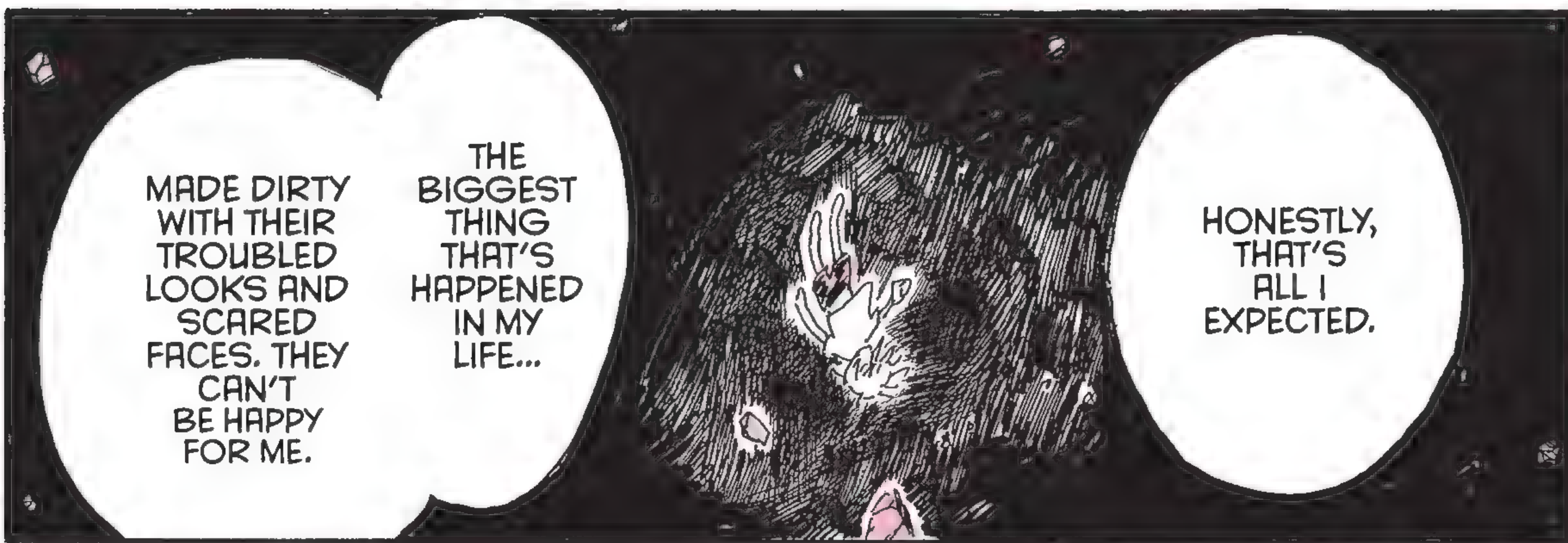
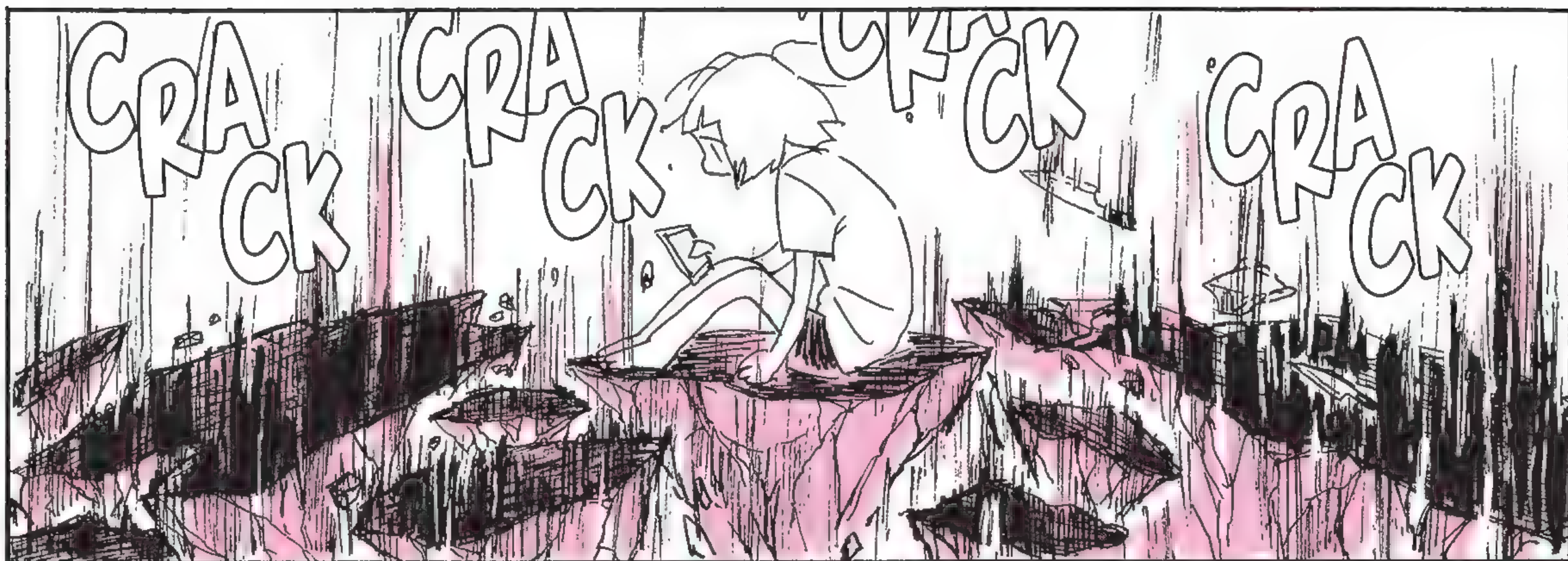


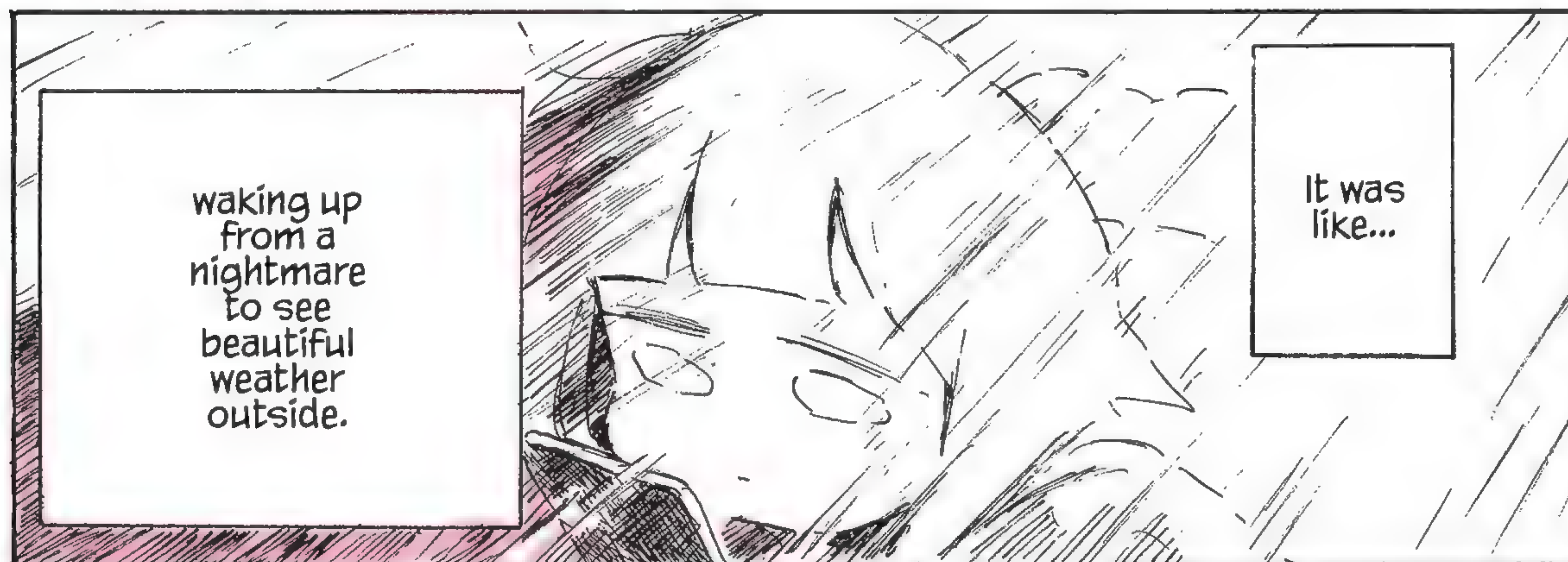
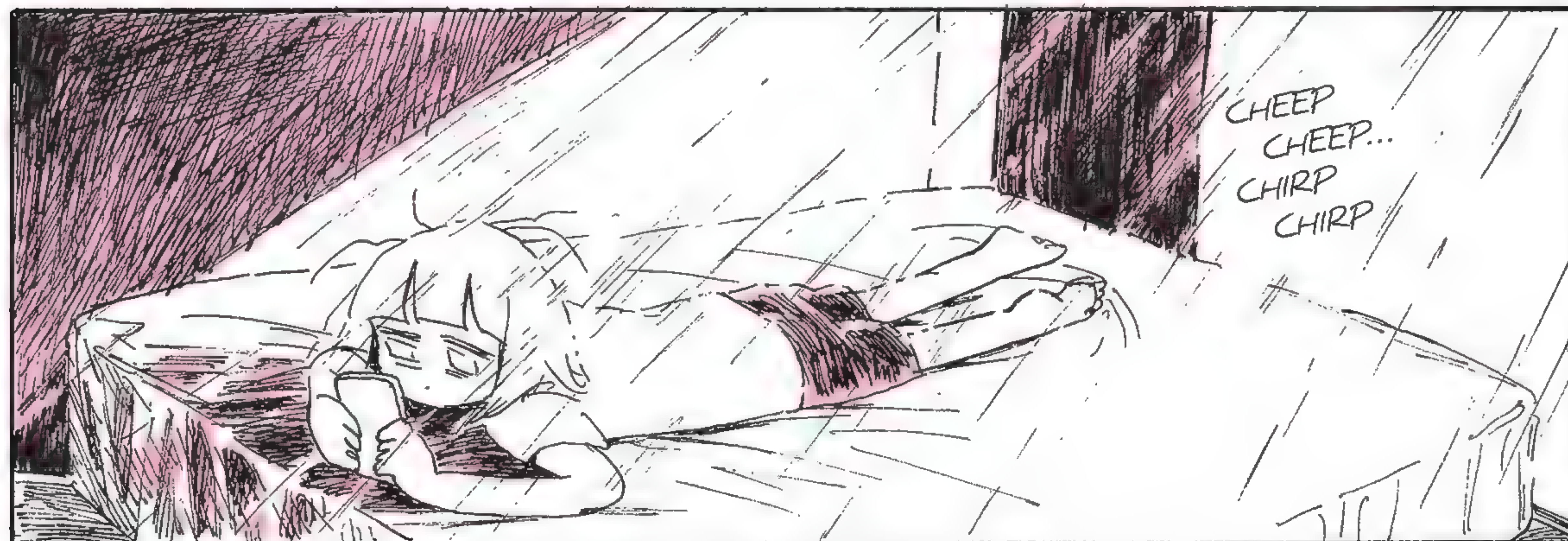


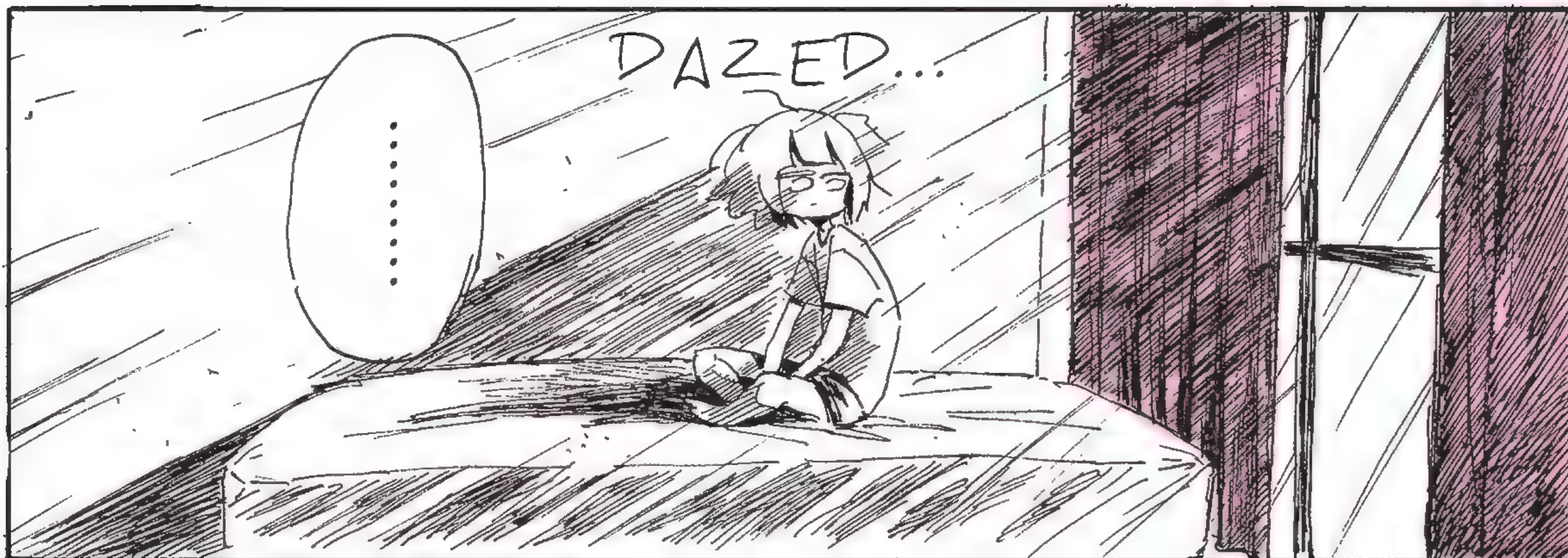




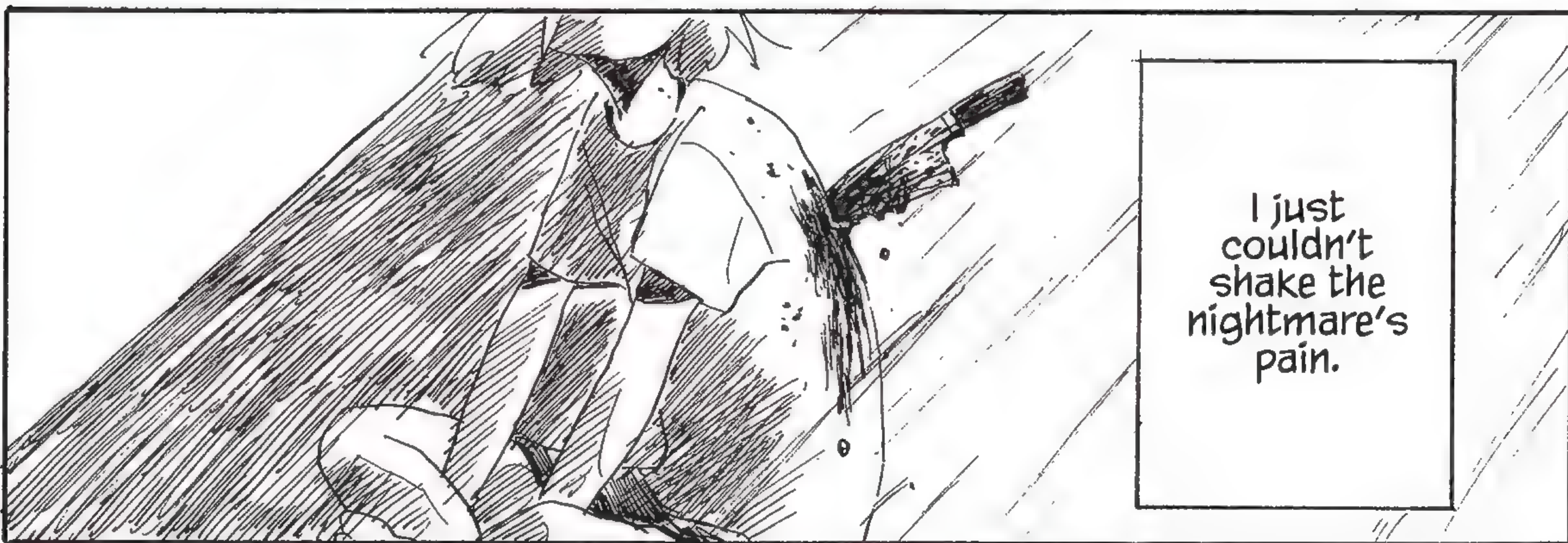




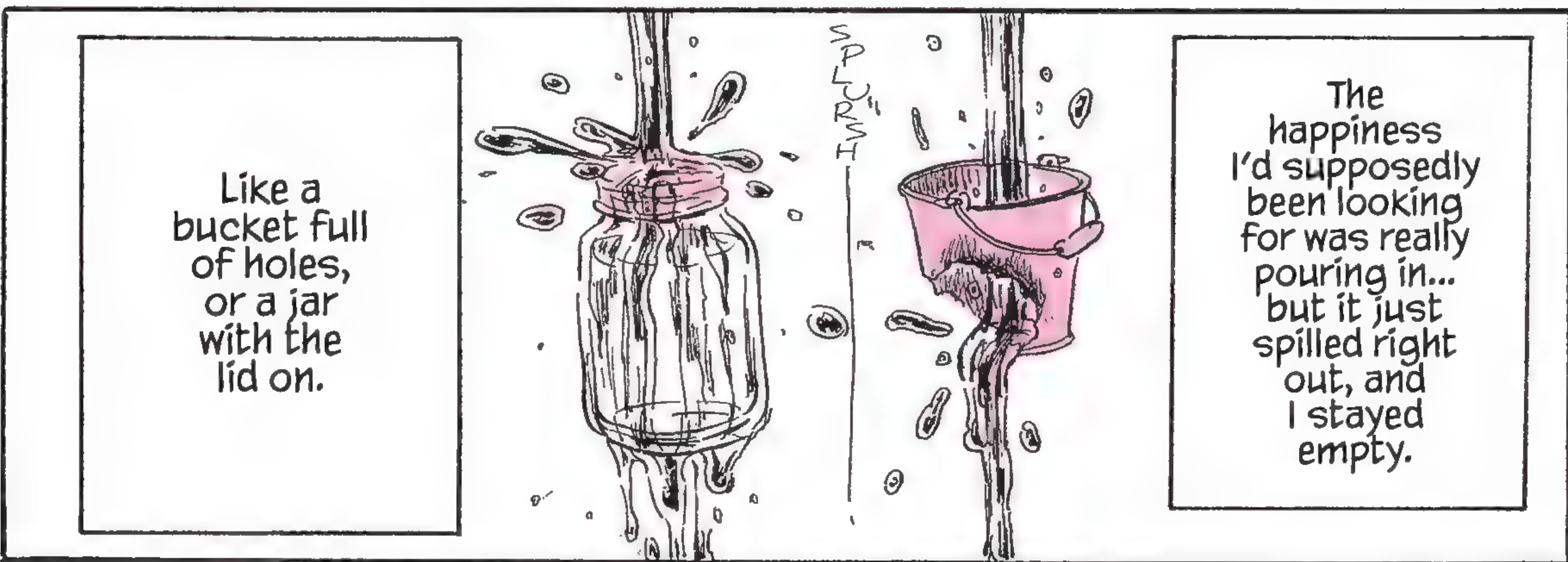




But even though I knew I'd be happier if I stepped out into that lovely weather...



I just couldn't shake the nightmare's pain.



Like a bucket full of holes, or a jar with the lid on.

The happiness I'd supposedly been looking for was really pouring in... but it just spilled right out, and I stayed empty.



I JUST
HAVE TO
TAKE IT
NOW!
GO ON--
TAKE IT!

I MADE IT
WITHOUT
HAVING TO
FACE THE
NIGHTMARE
(MY PARENTS),
AND I'M
GETTING THE
GOOD REVIEWS
I WANTED.



I HATE THE
ME WHO'S STILL
FIXATED ON MOM,
EVEN WHILE SO
MANY OTHER
PEOPLE PRAISE
ME! SHE
SUCKS!!



FORGET
ABOUT
HER!!

JUST
GIVE
IT UP,
OKAY?!
STOP
GETTING
HURT!

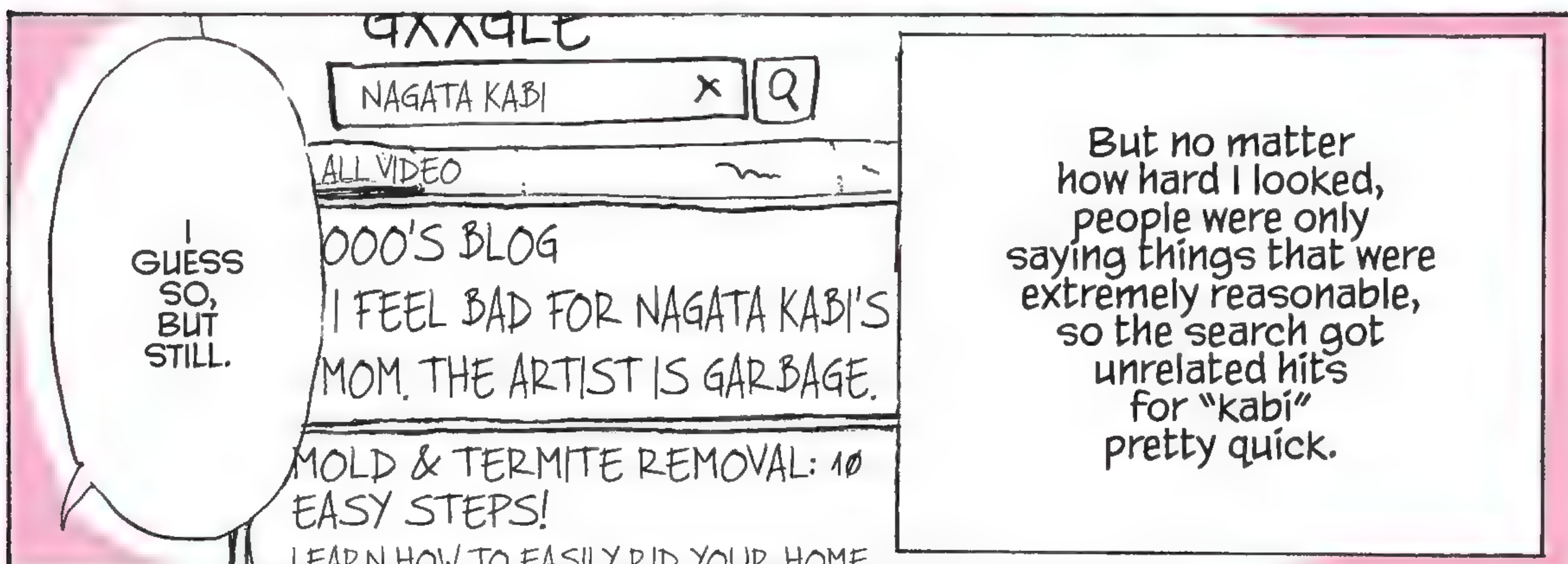
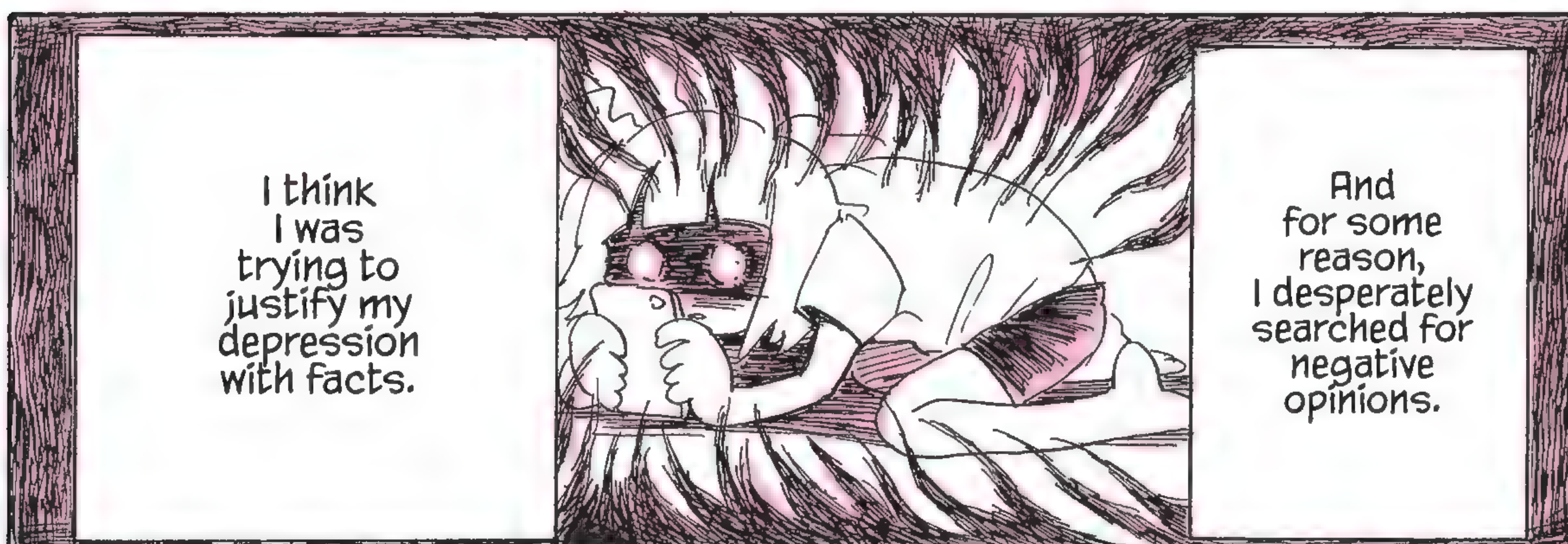
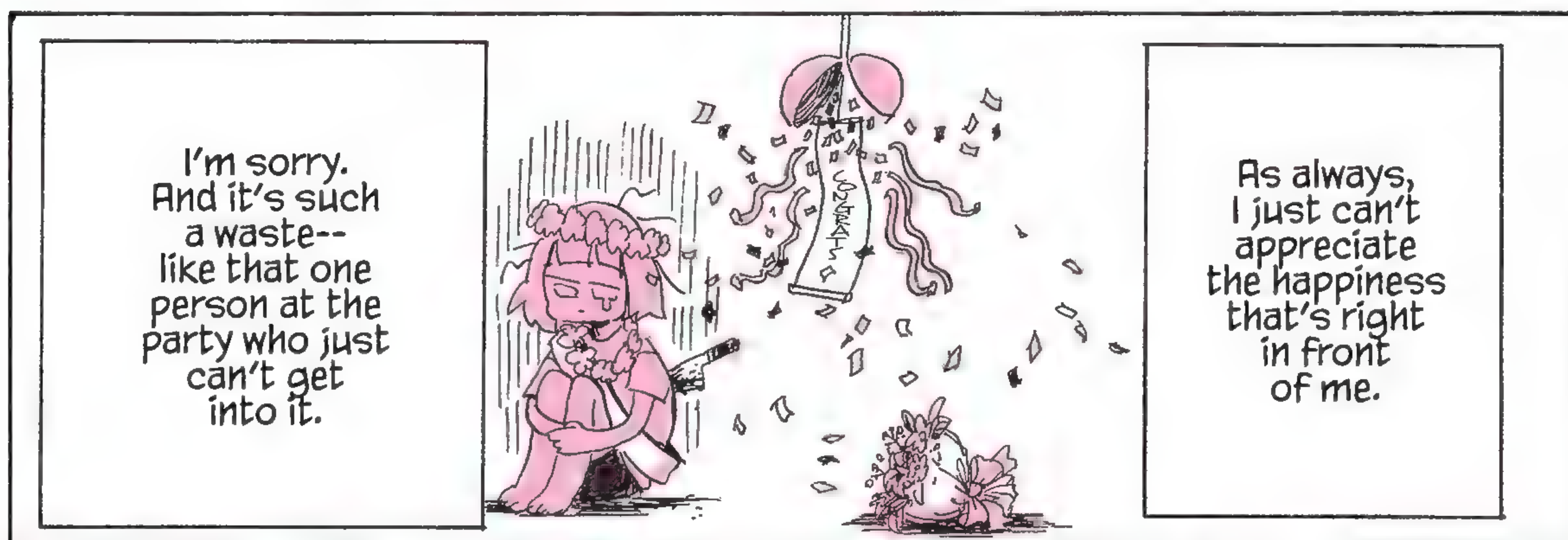
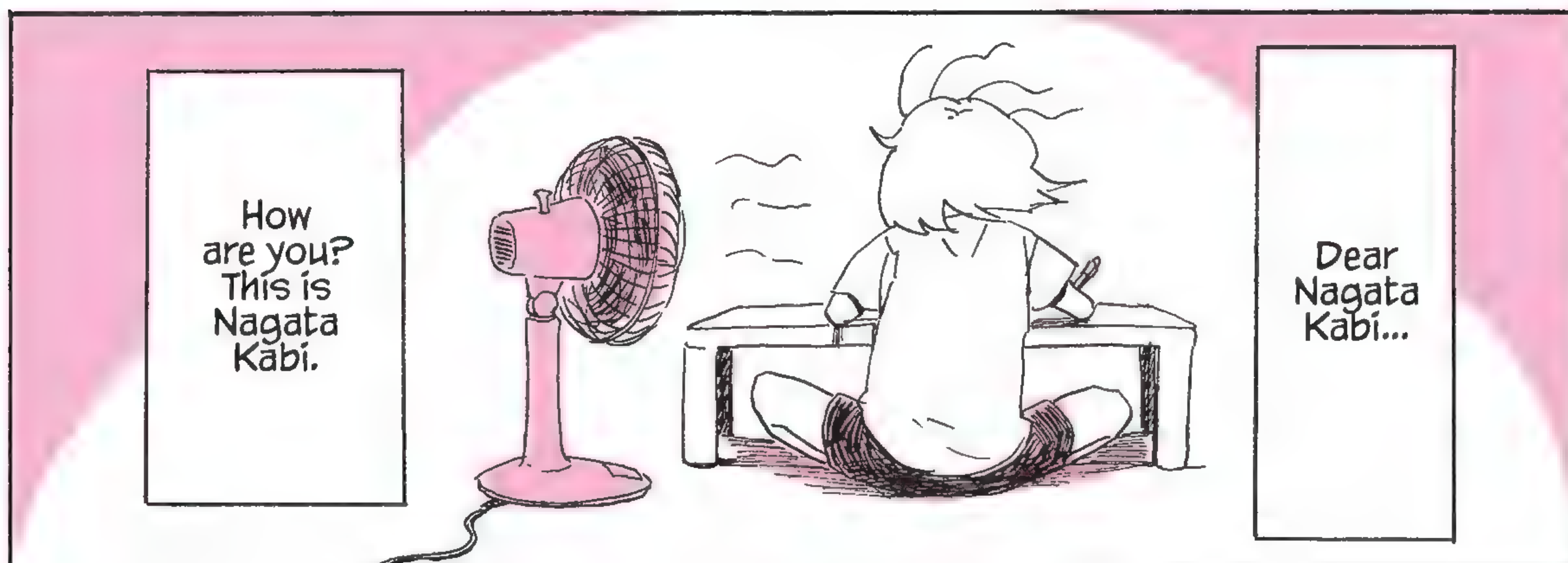
WHY
ARE YOU
OBSESSED
WITH
MOM?!



Please,
as-soon-as
possible me...
get to a place
where you
can accept
this joy.

At long last,
I was facing
the final stages
of separation
from my mother.
(Is this really
the end?)

My
Solo
Exchange
Diary



But let's
put that
aside
for now.
Living alone
is great,
so let me
tell you
about it.

HEH
HEH
HEH...



The scary
dream state
continued
in my head.

First,
I clean
for real
now.

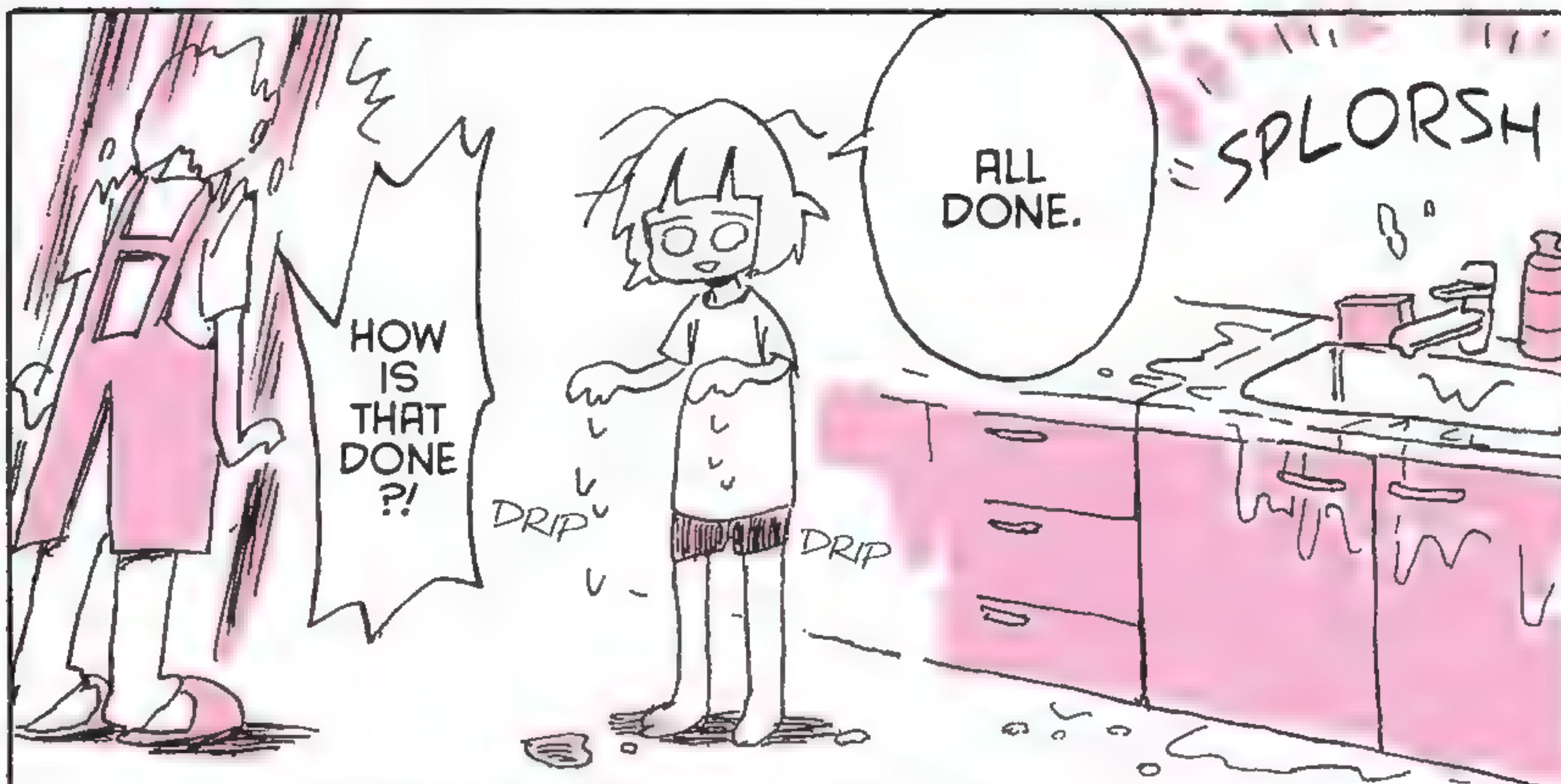


There've
been
two big
changes.

Cleaning's
become
a habit
when I can't
concentrate--
or after my
deadlines.



I can't
believe it,
either. It's
part of
what I
do here.



When I
was at my
parents' house,
my cleanliness
standards were...
very different
from theirs.

Eventually,
I gave up on
the whole
endeavor and
stopped
cleaning
altogether.

WHERE
?!

THERE'S
STILL
A DROP
OF WATER
THERE.

I DON'T
WANT TO.
YOU'LL
JUST TELL
ME I'M
DOING IT
WRONG.

.....

WHY
DON'T
YOU
CLEAN
IF YOU'VE
GOT
NOTHING
TO DO?

It's like that
thing you
hear about--
the husband
who doesn't
wanna clean
since his wife
nitpicks him
whenever
he does.

Or like a
bride who
runs away,
unable to
endure her
nagging
mother-
in-law.

I'M
GOING
BACK TO MY
PARENTS'
HOUSE!

AH, HEY!
SHE'S
GETTING
AWAY!

I think it's
good that
I can do
that stuff
at my own
pace, now.

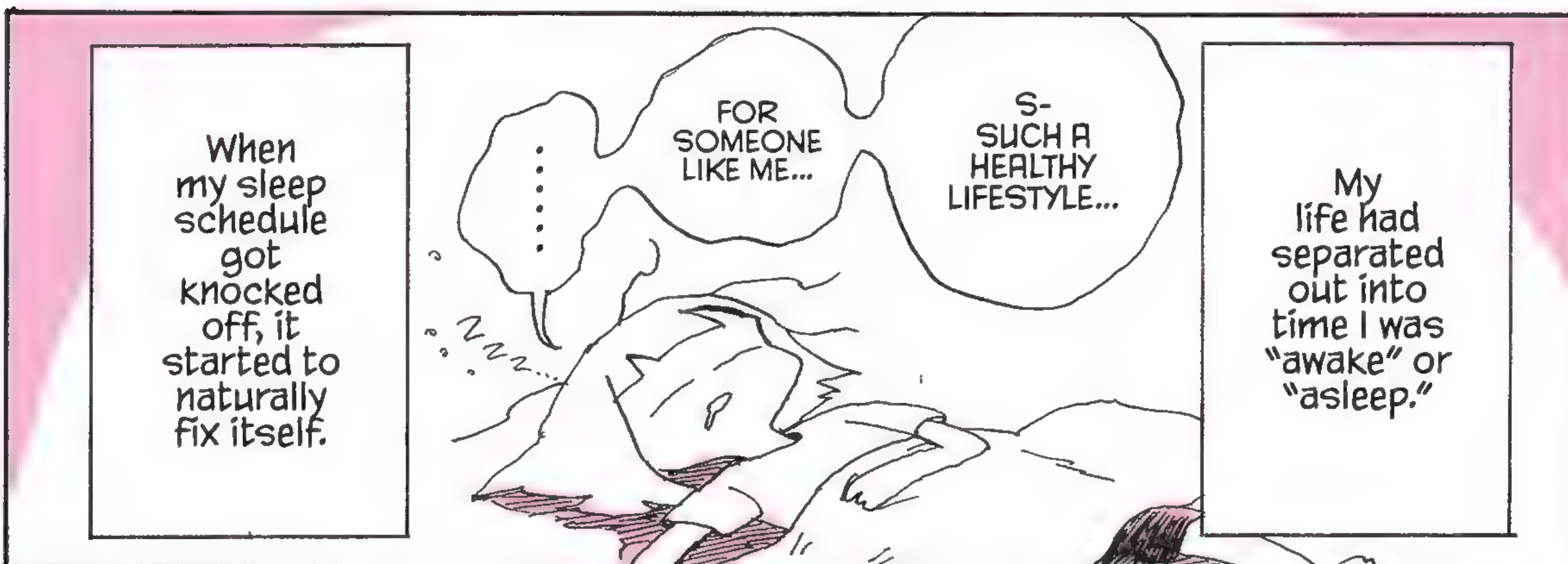
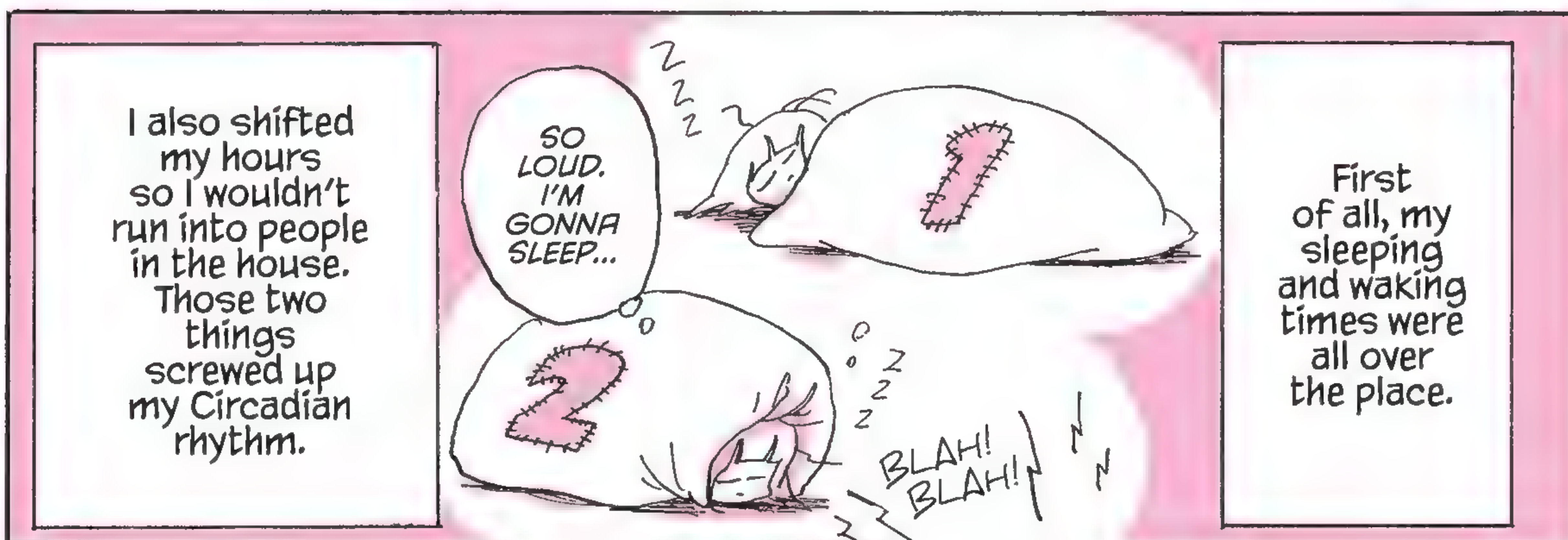
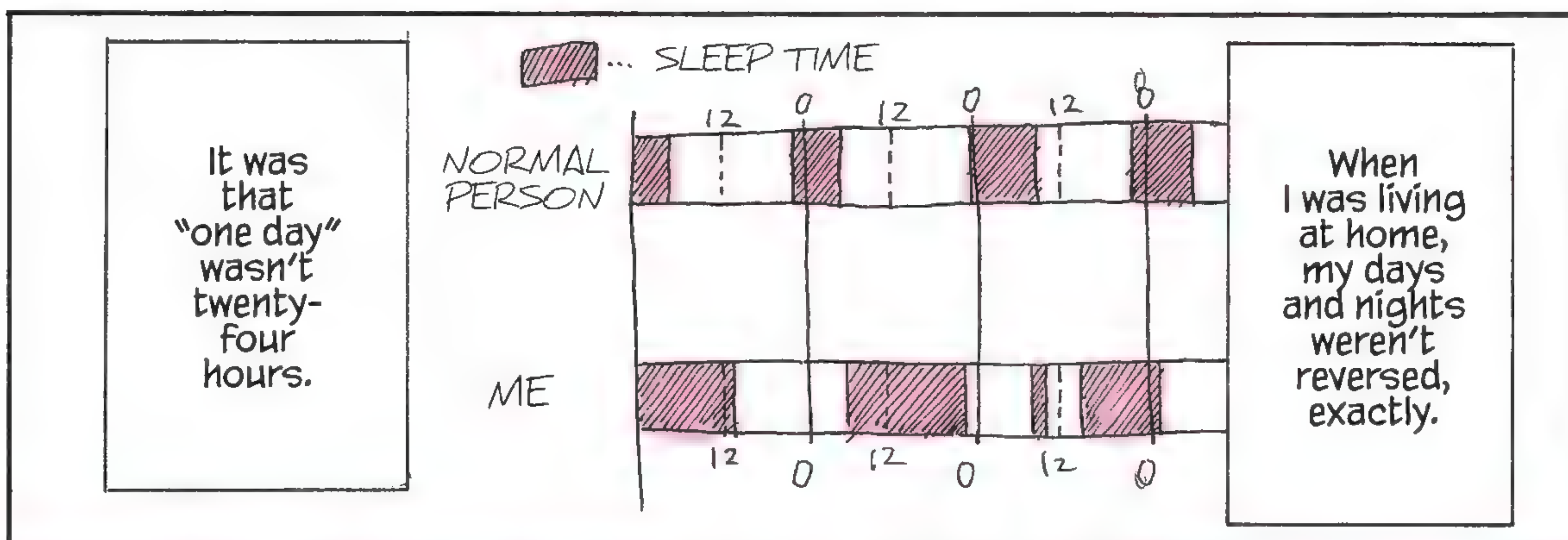
RIGHT,
TIME
TO
CLEAN!!

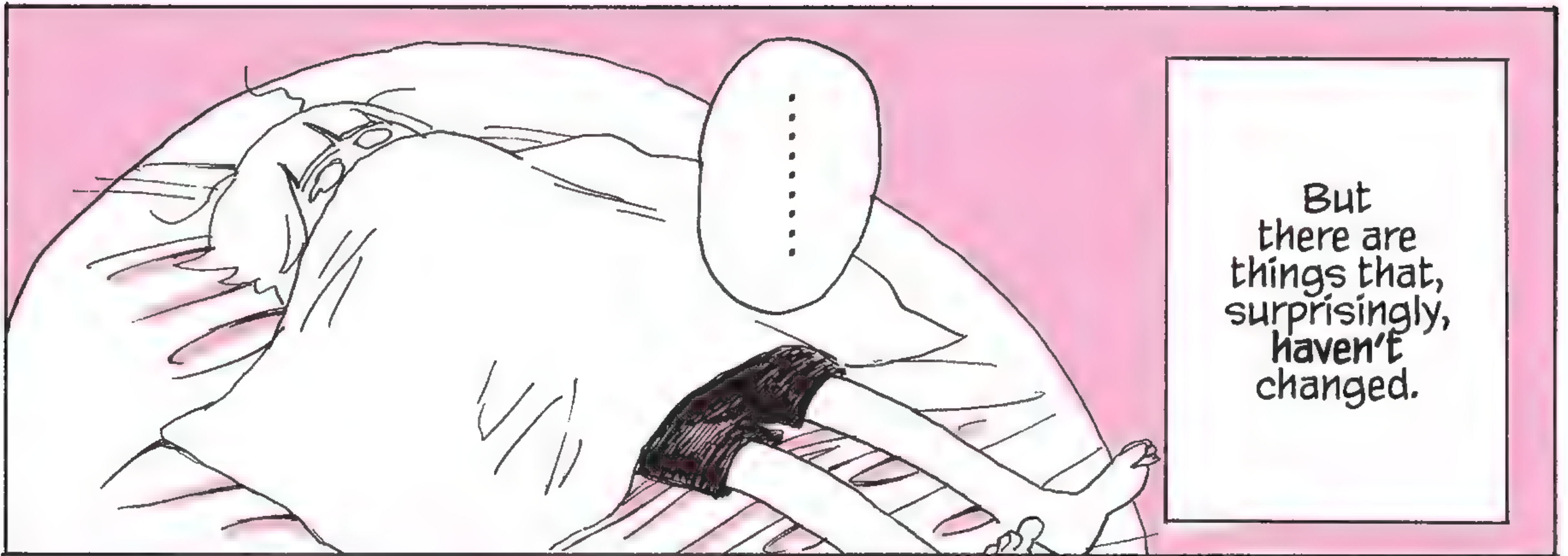
GROSS!

THAT
REEKS!

SMELL FROM
THE DRAIN.

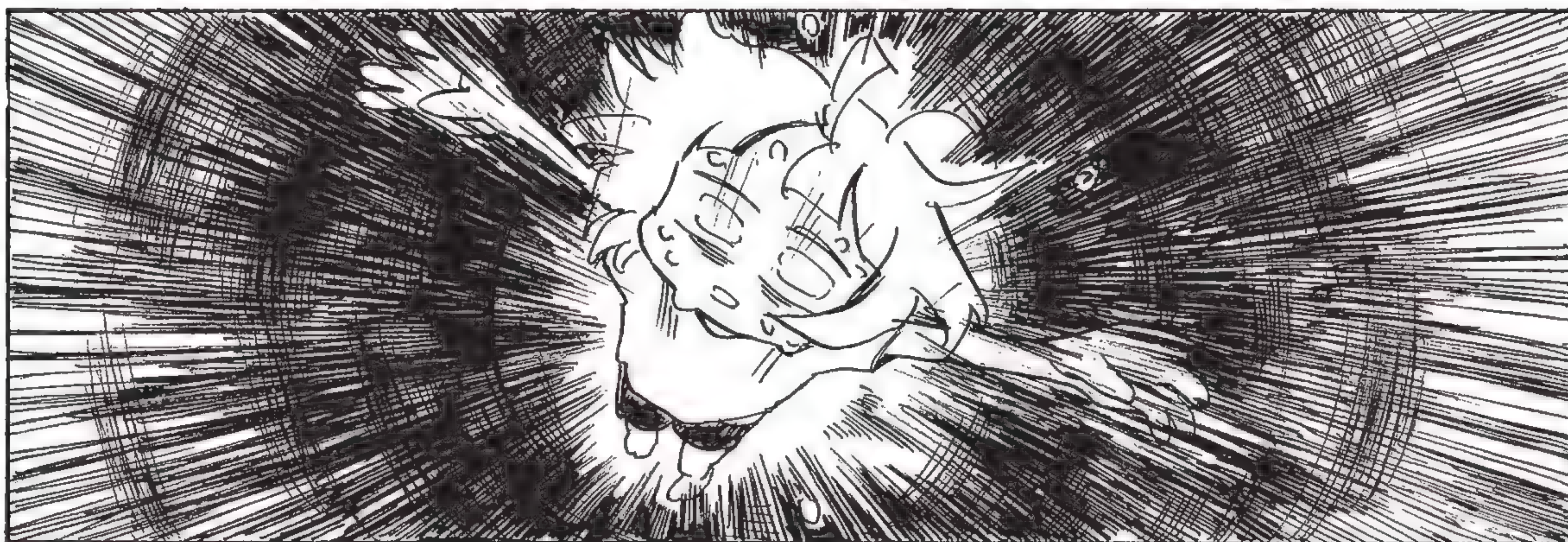
No one was
nitpicking
me now,
and if I wasn't
cleaning enough,
I was the one
who suffered,
so it was
easy to tell.



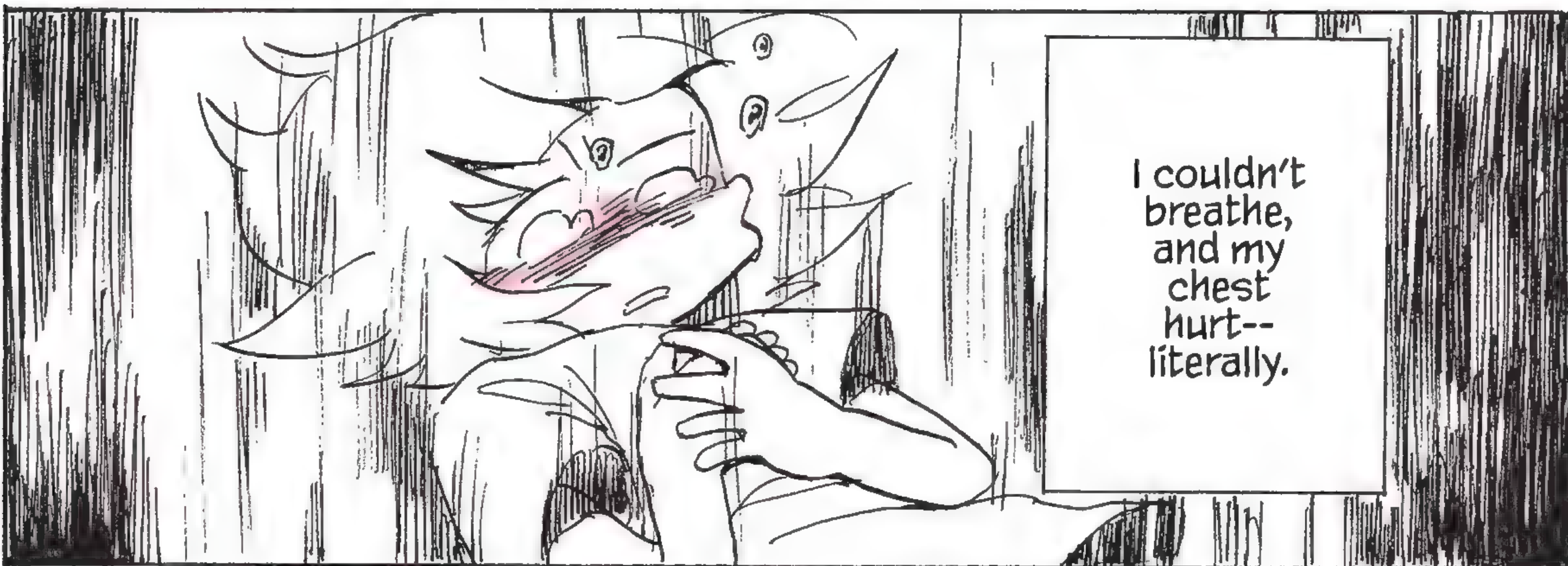




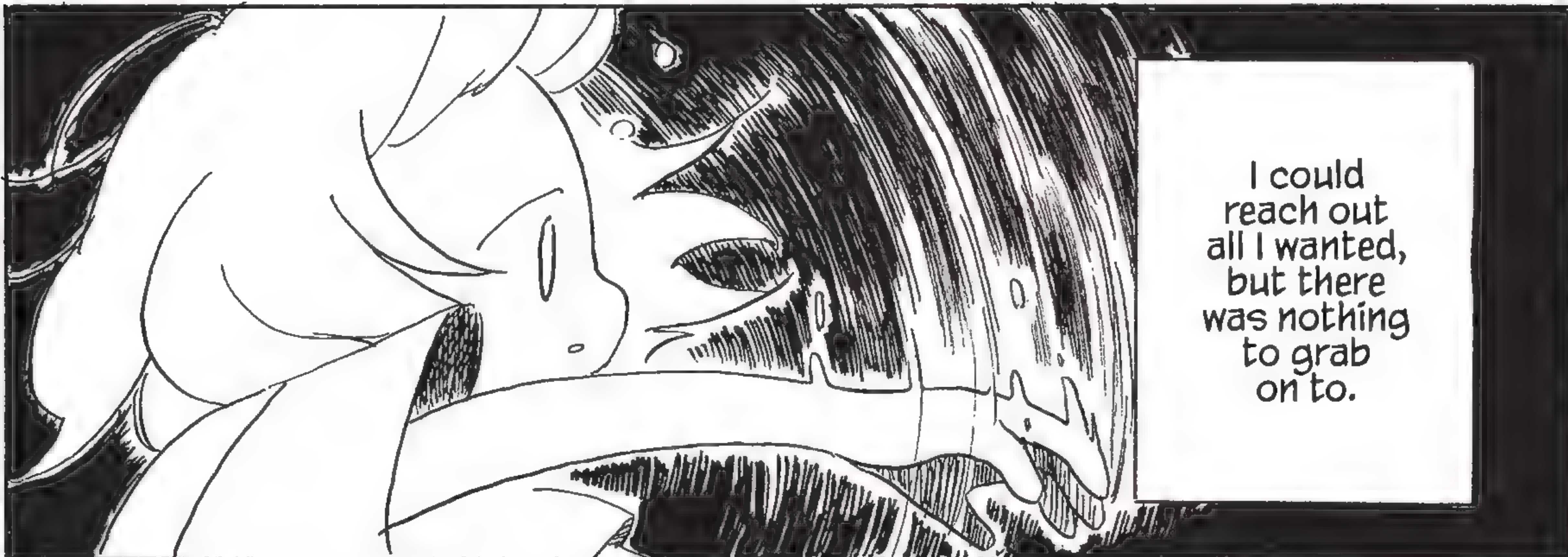
One
or the
other.
Or a
double
feature.



When
I realized this
so abruptly,
it felt like
falling into a
bottomless
pit.



I couldn't
breathe,
and my
chest
hurt--
literally.



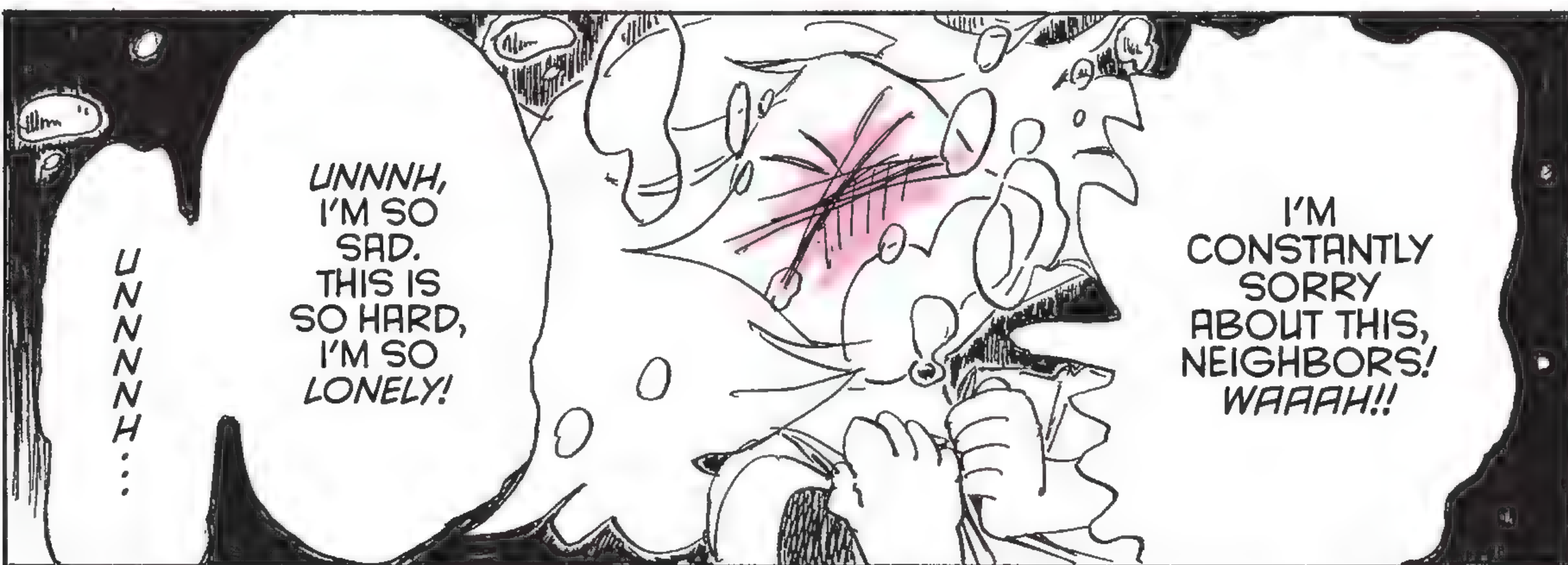
I could reach out all I wanted, but there was nothing to grab on to.



Maybe the closest comparison to that feeling...



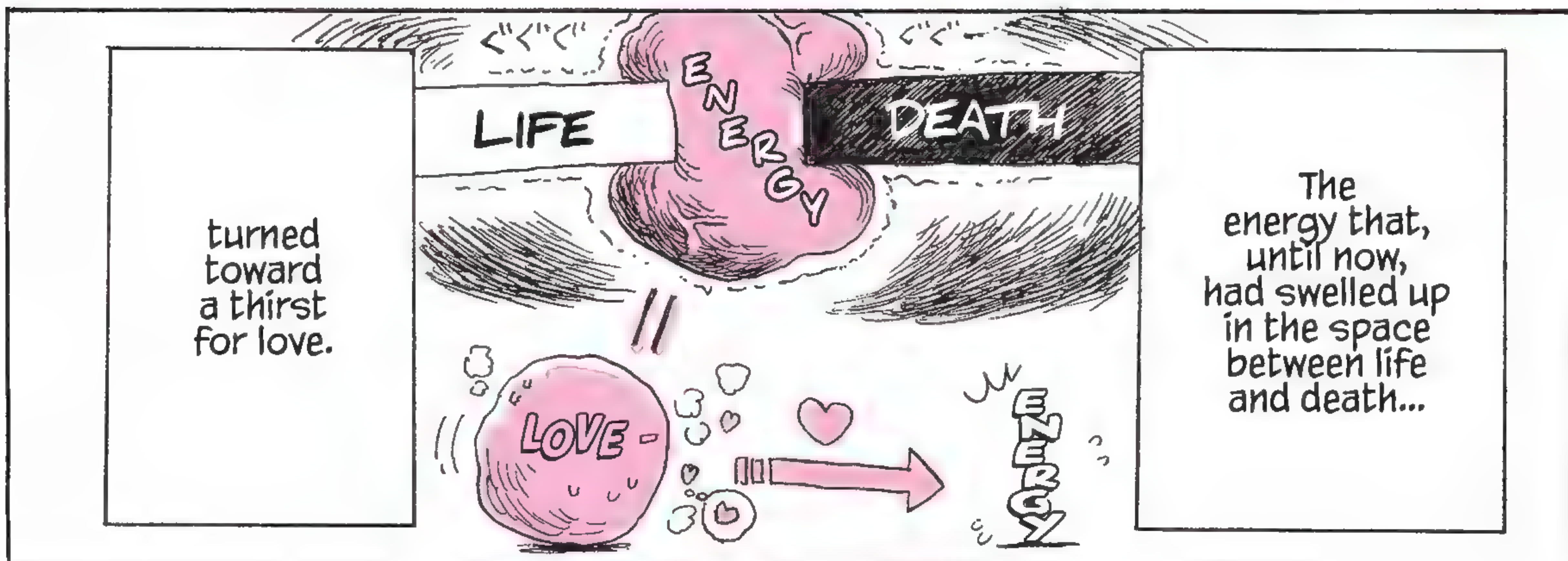
is the despair of a drowning person when they realize there's no air.

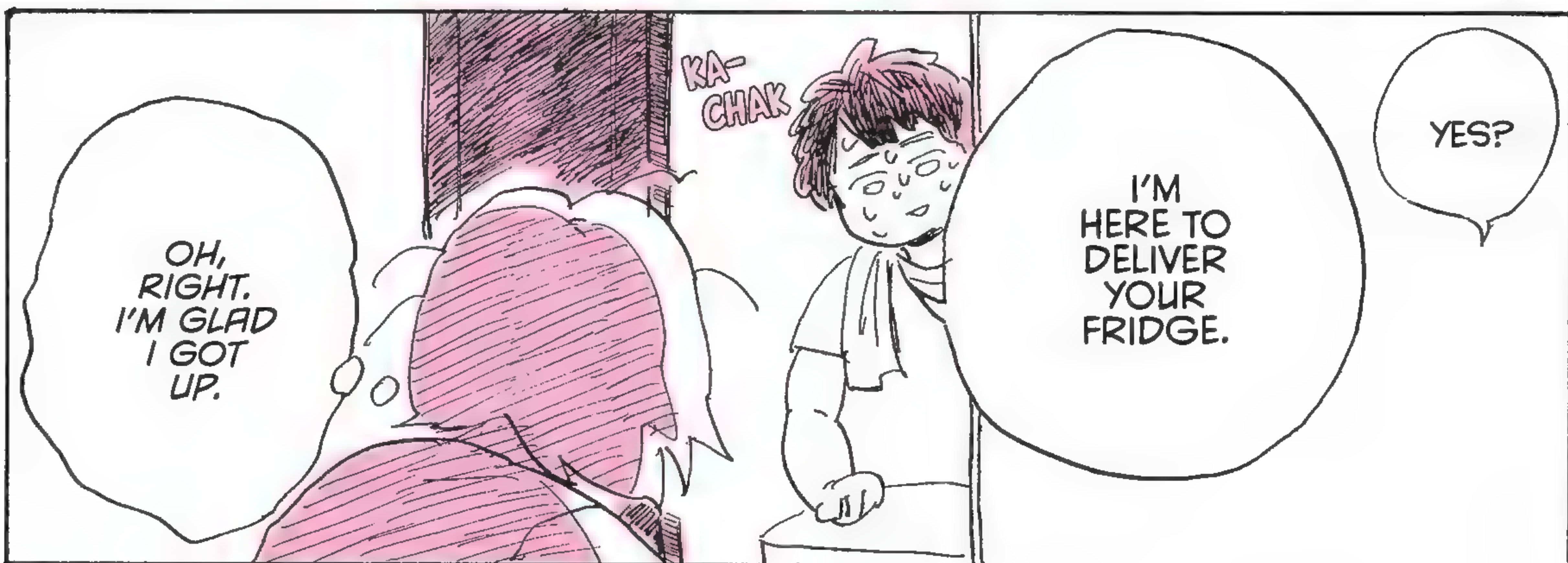
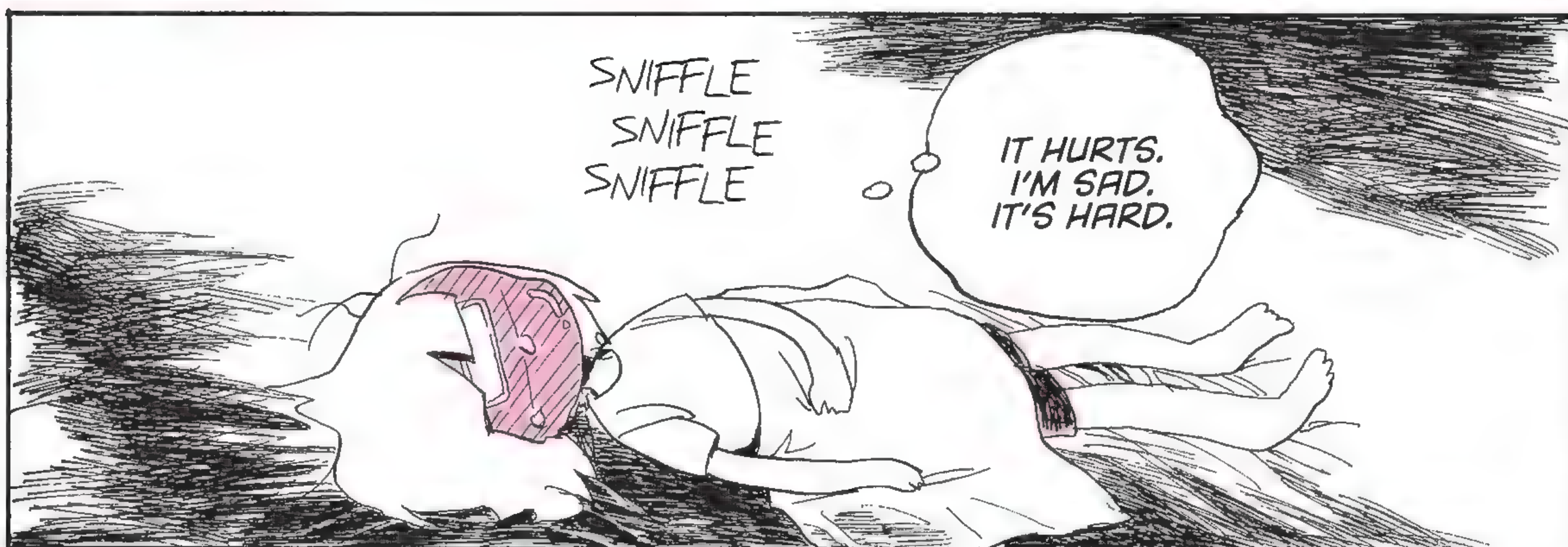


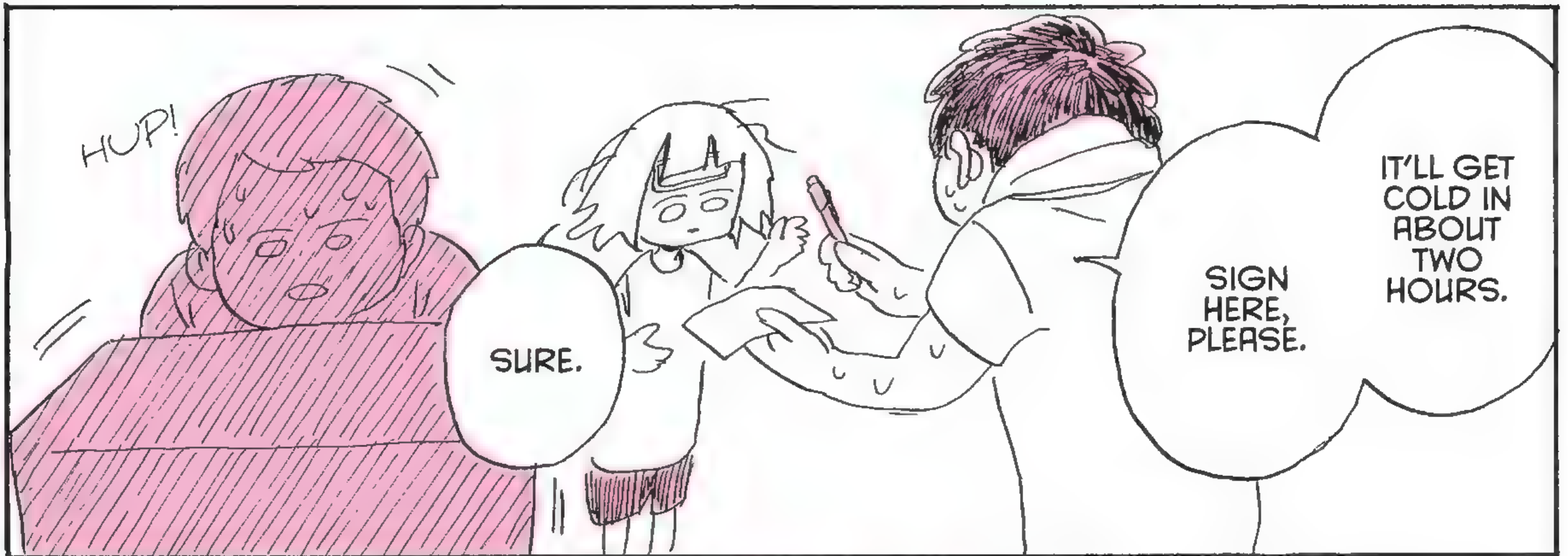
UNNNH...

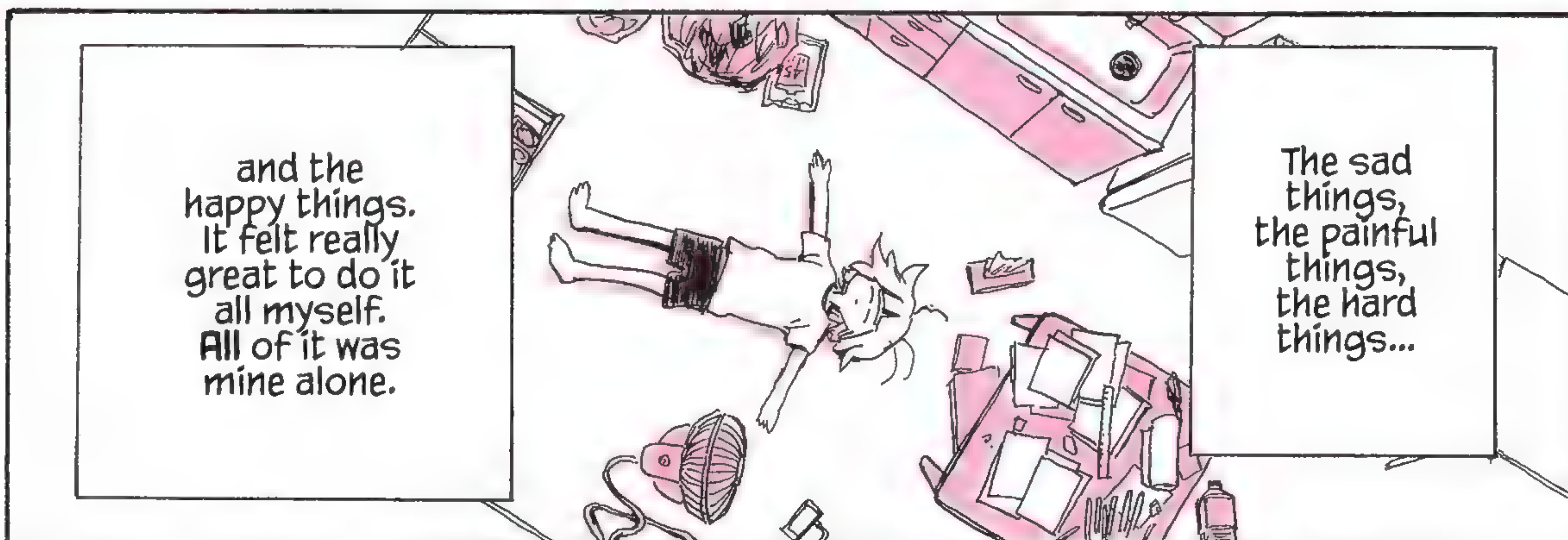
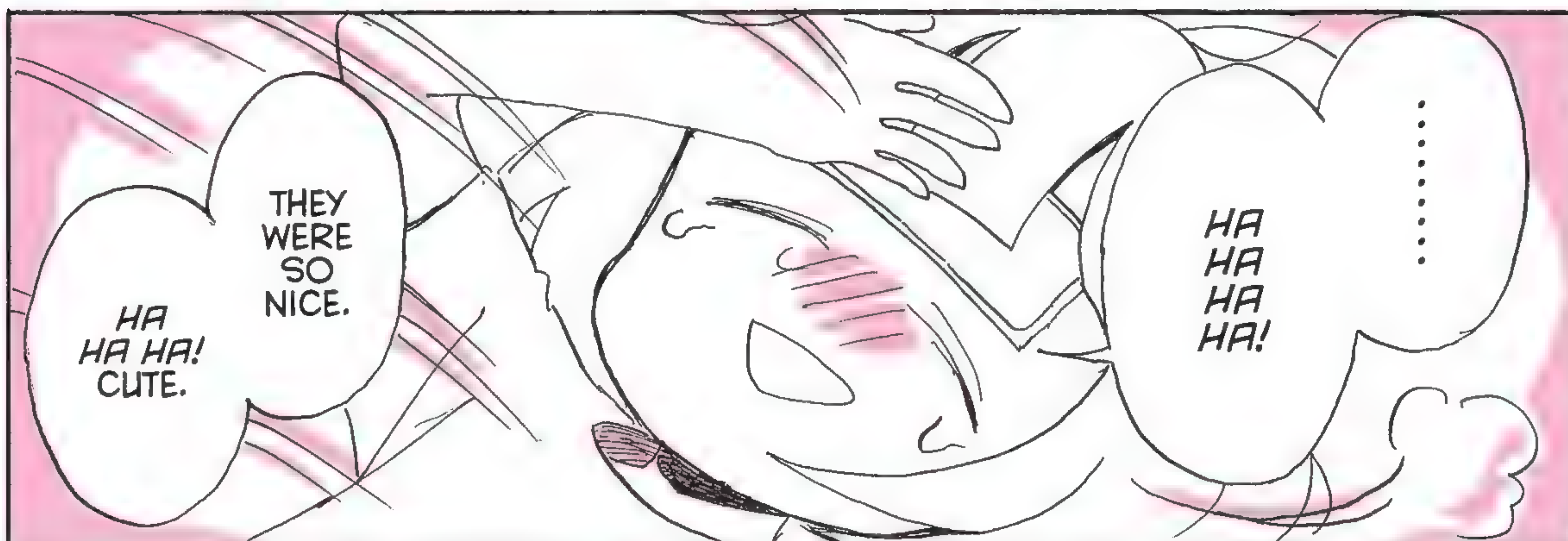
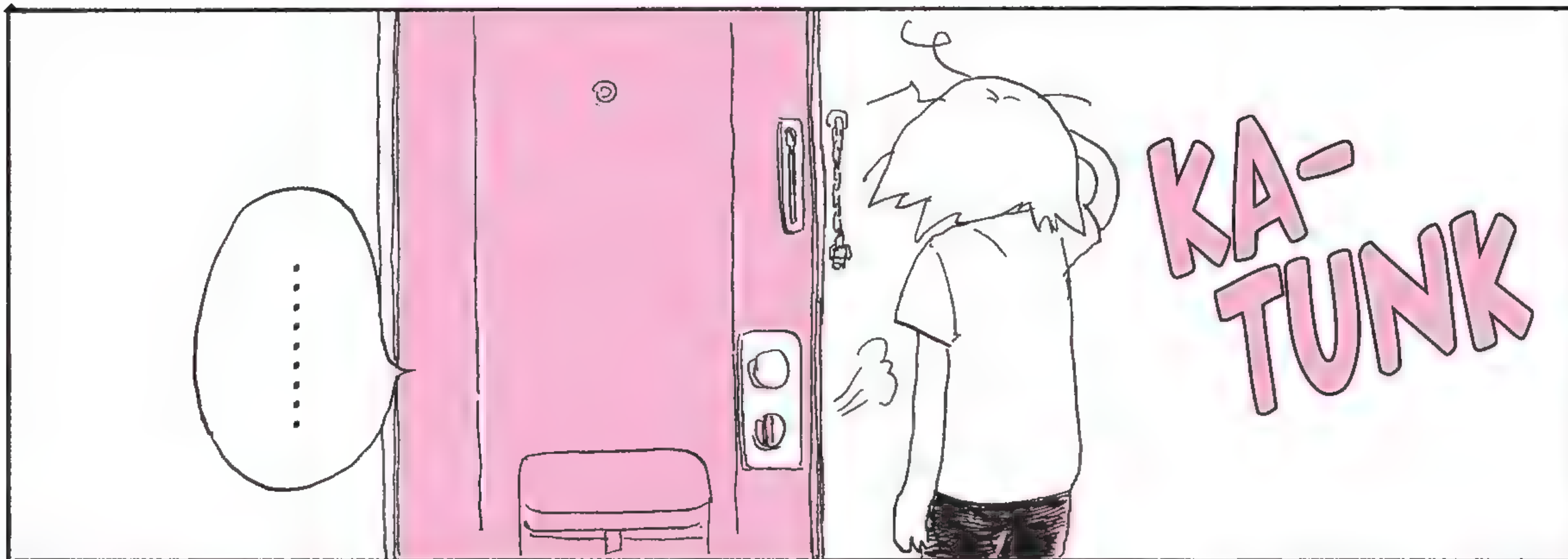
UNNNH, I'M SO SAD. THIS IS SO HARD, I'M SO LONELY!

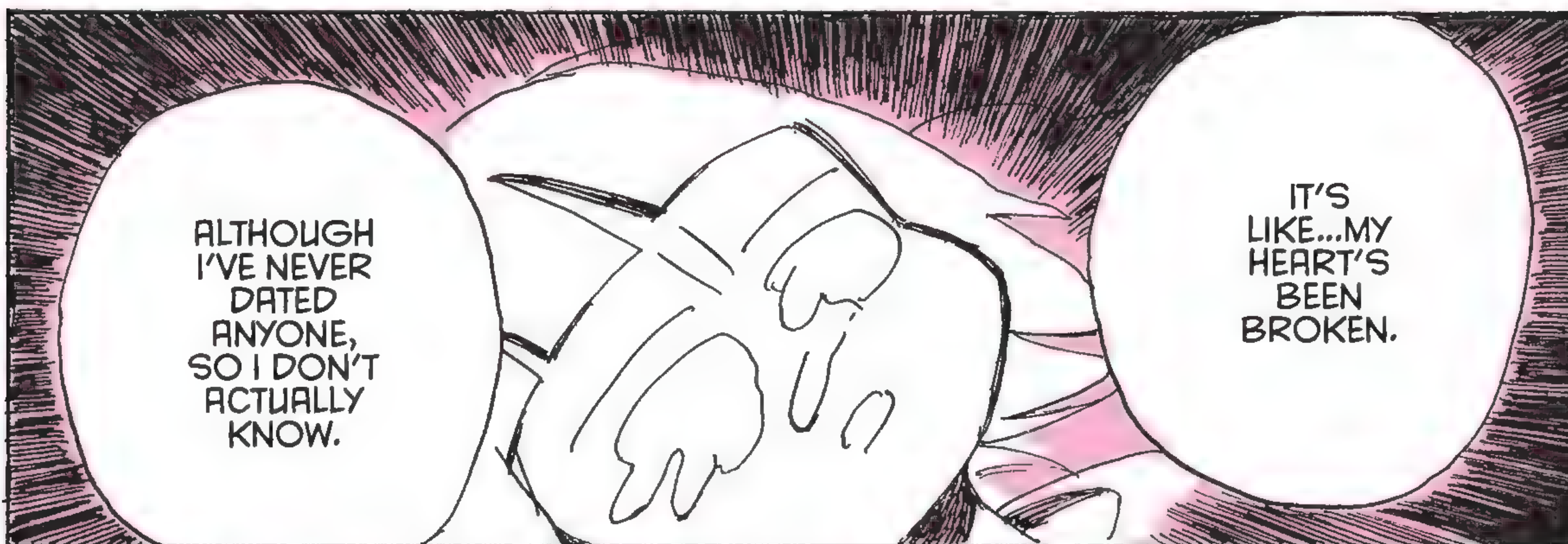
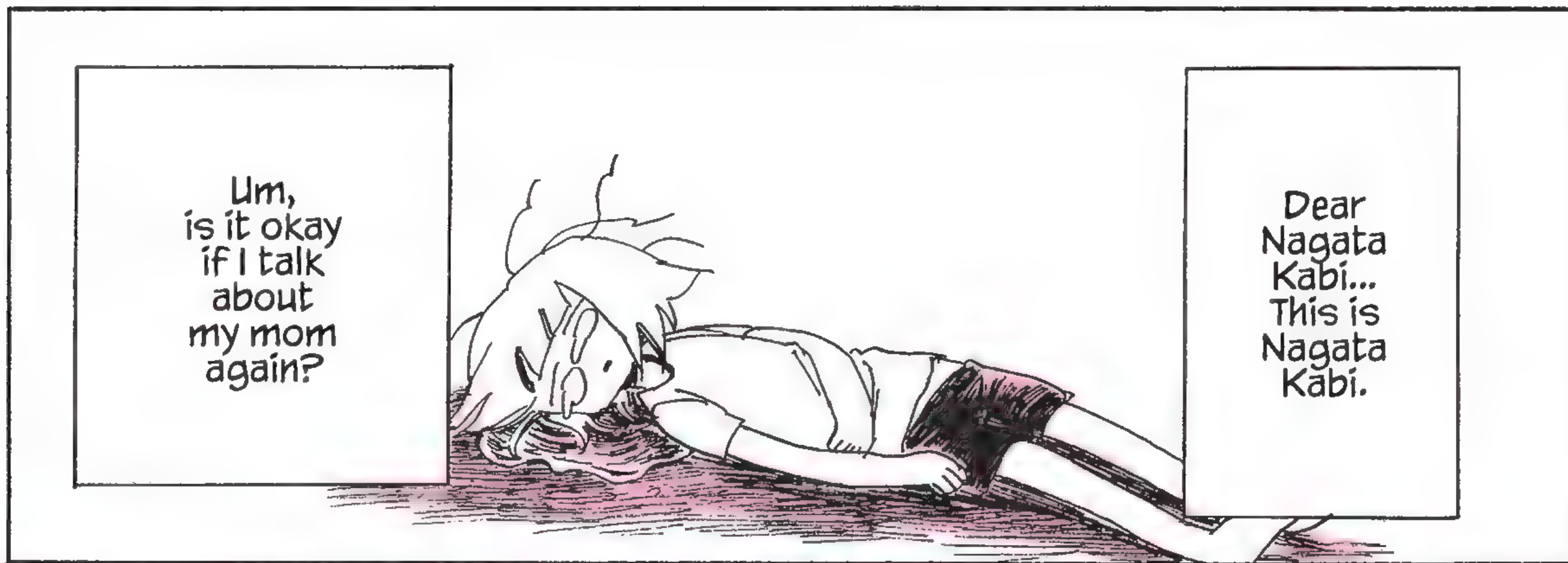
I'M CONSTANTLY SORRY ABOUT THIS, NEIGHBORS! WAAAH!!

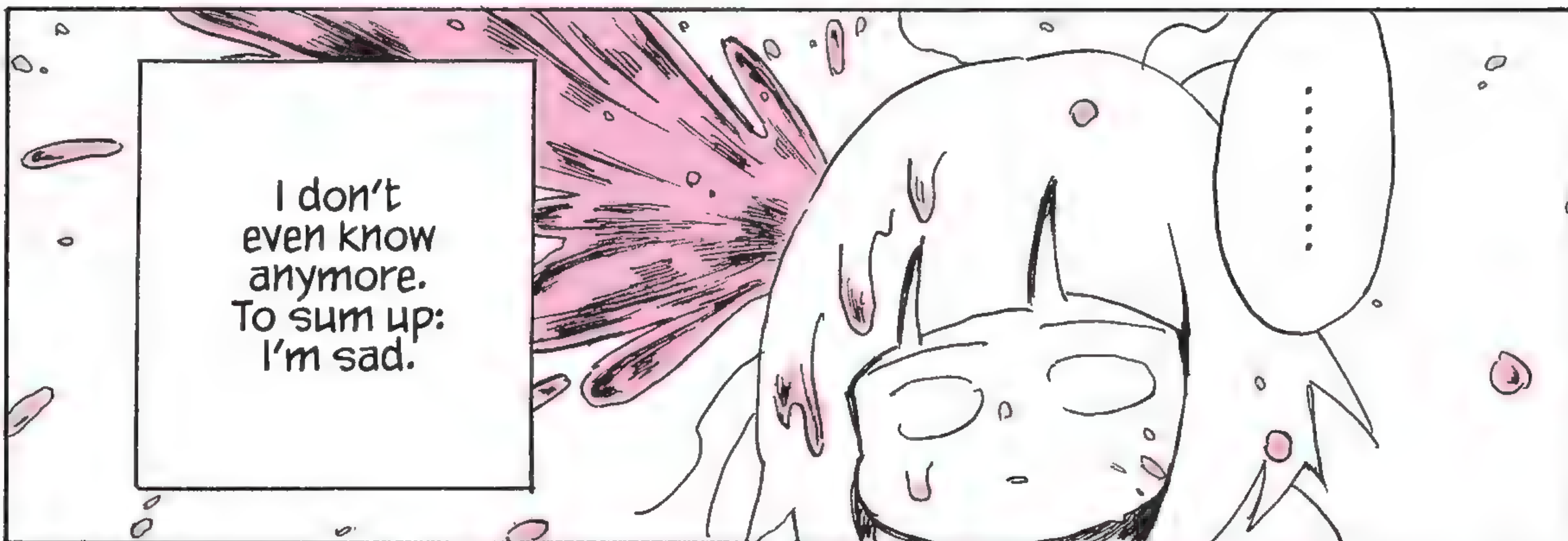
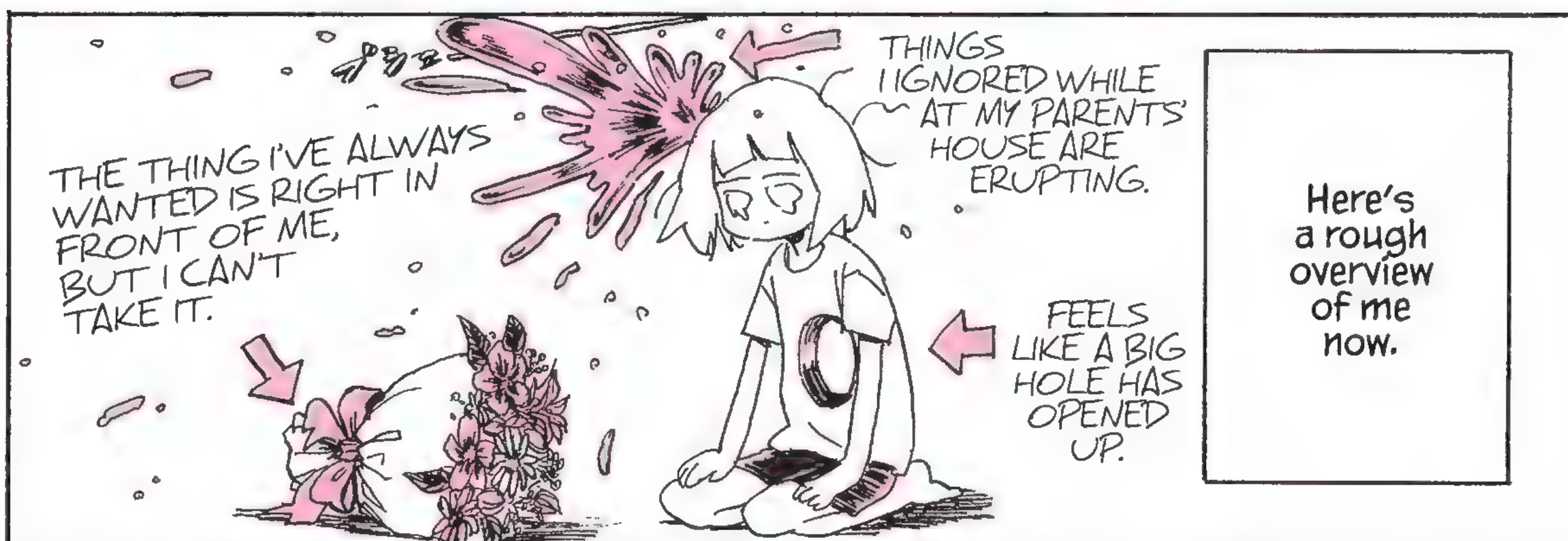








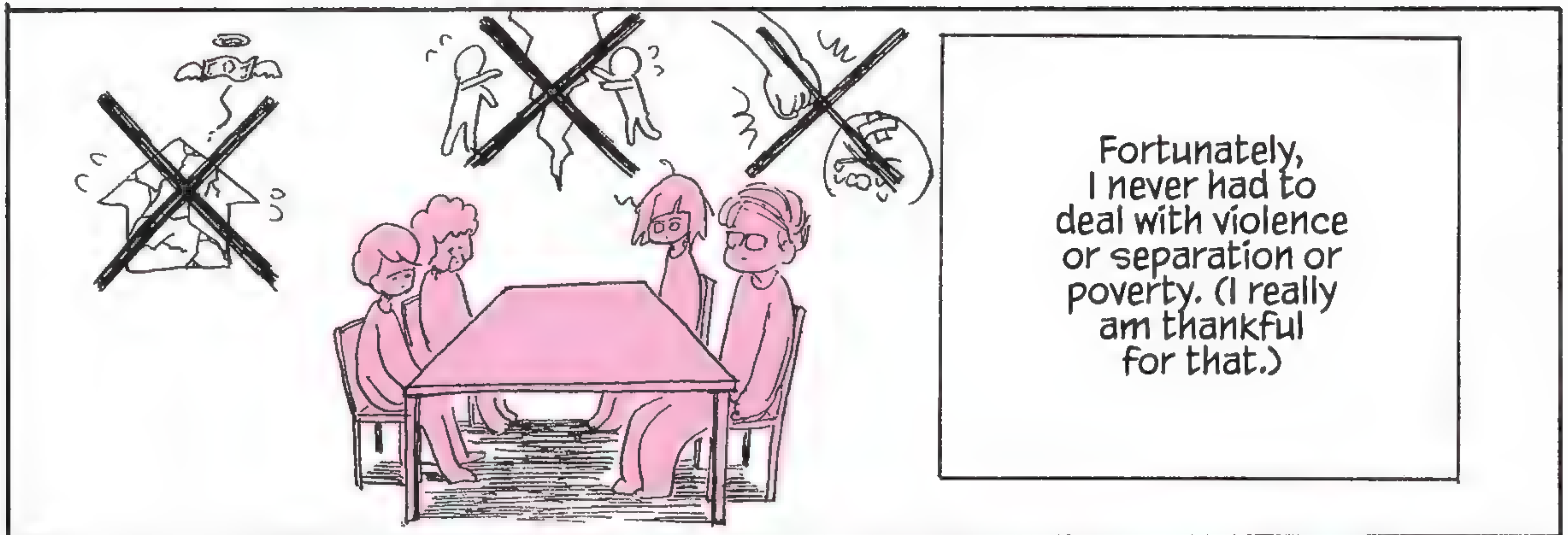








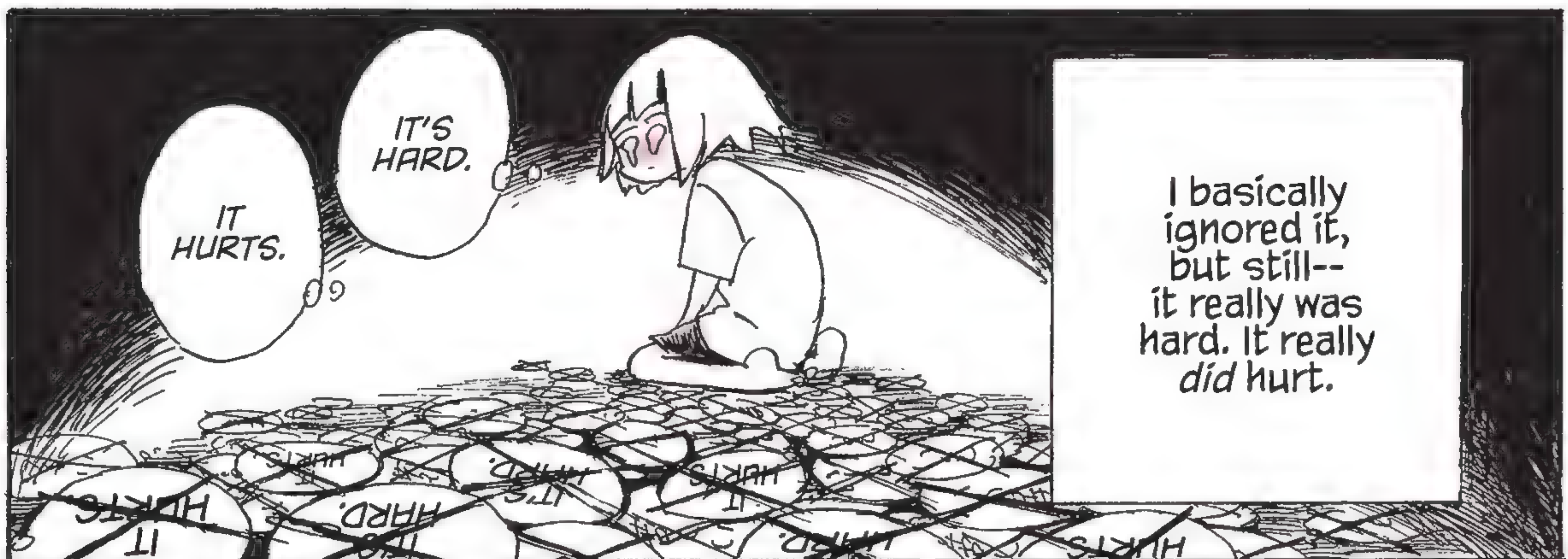
I thought that the bad stuff and the rigidity meant that my family loved me.



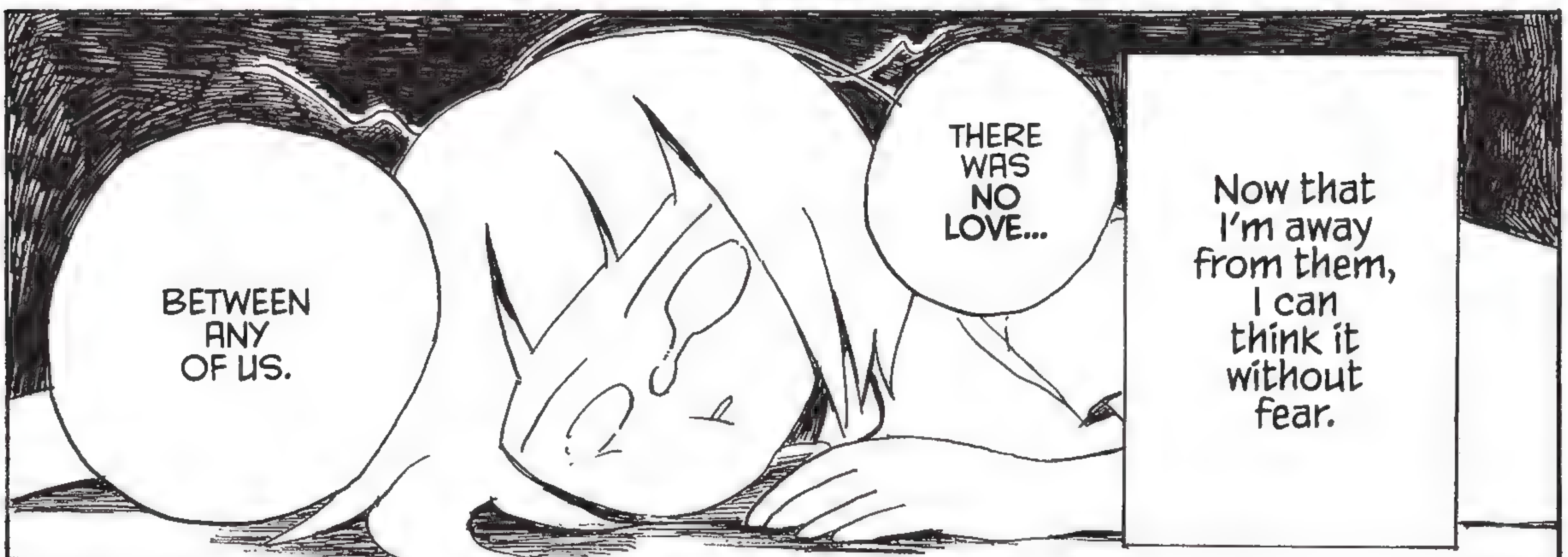
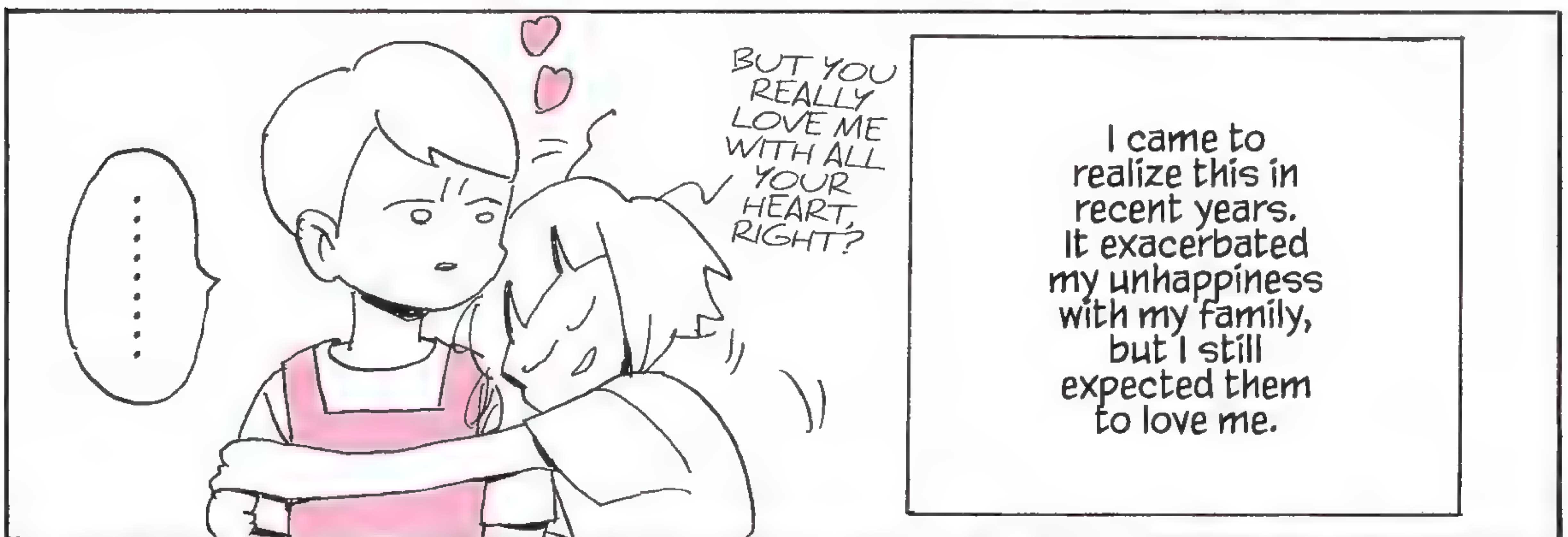
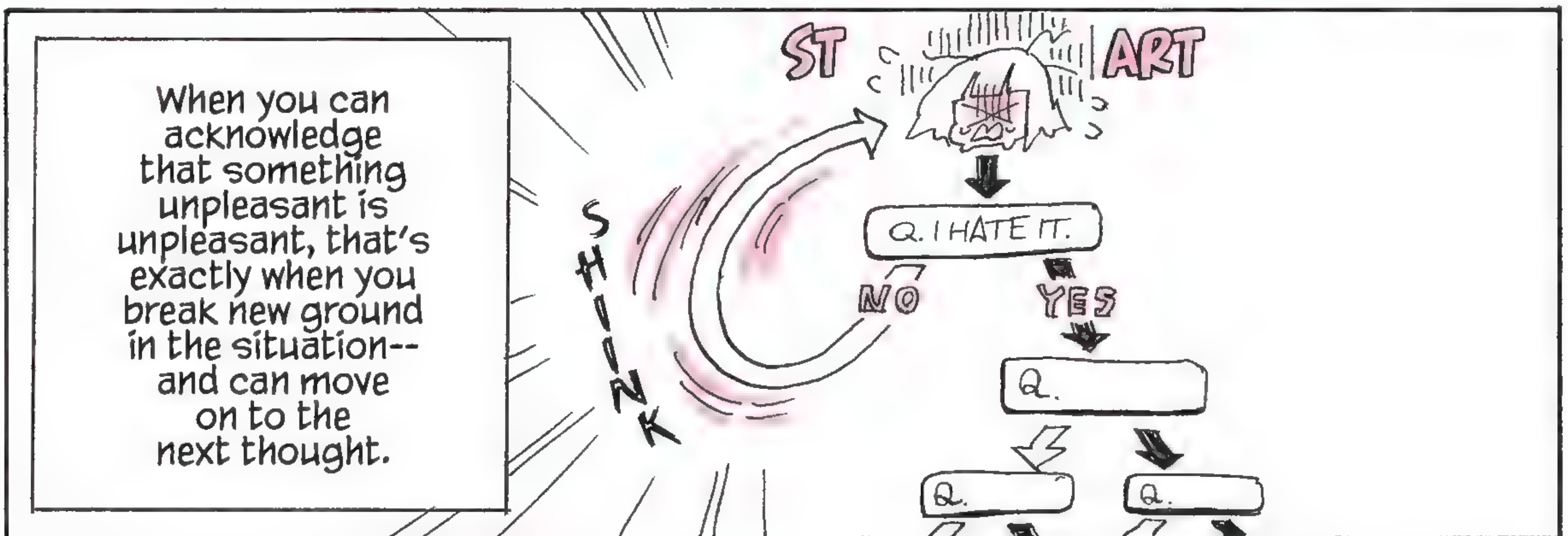
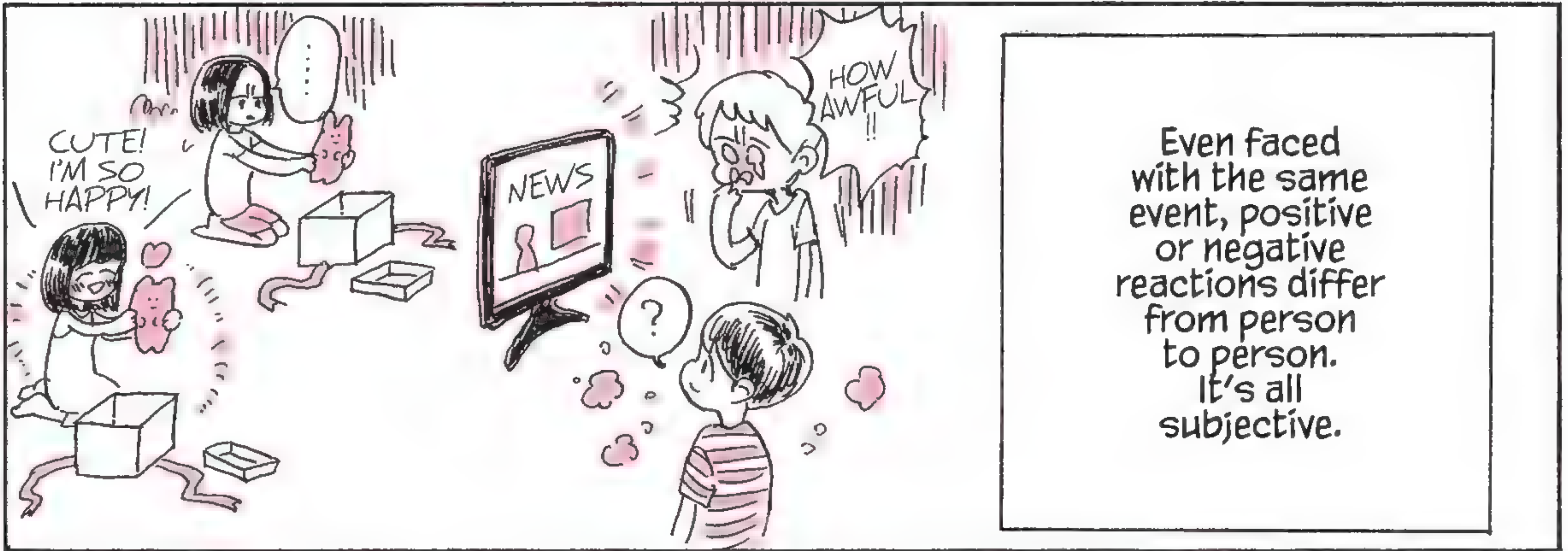
Fortunately, I never had to deal with violence or separation or poverty. (I really am thankful for that.)



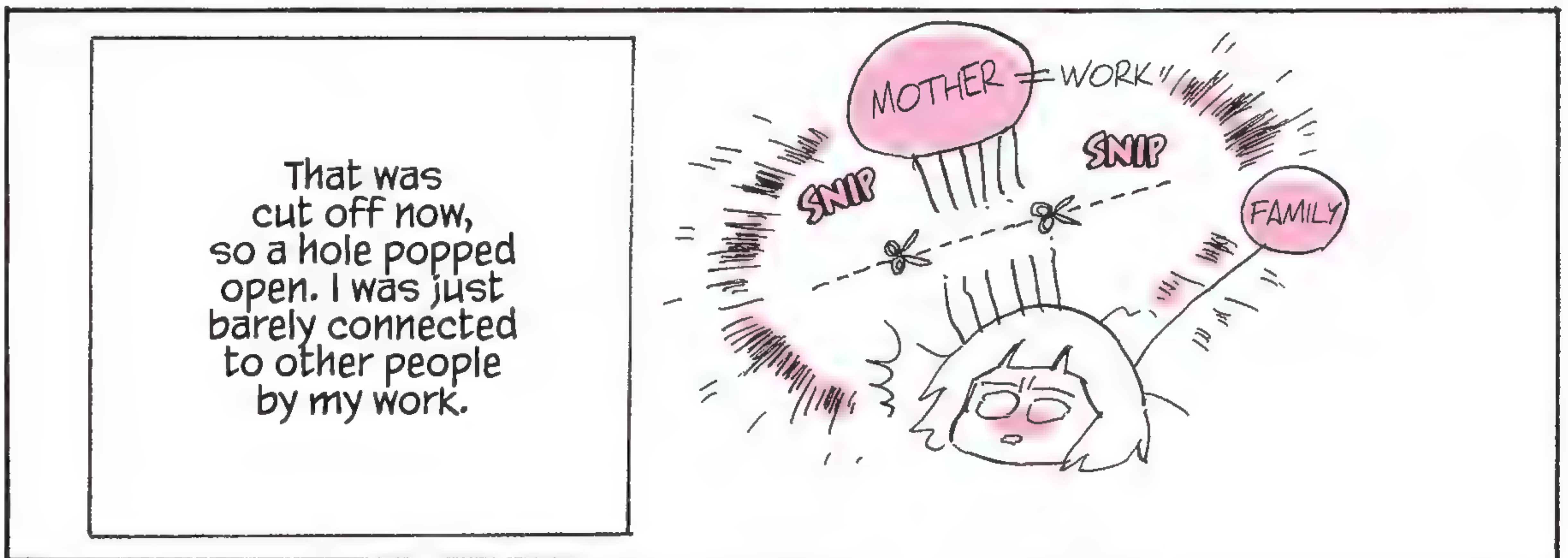
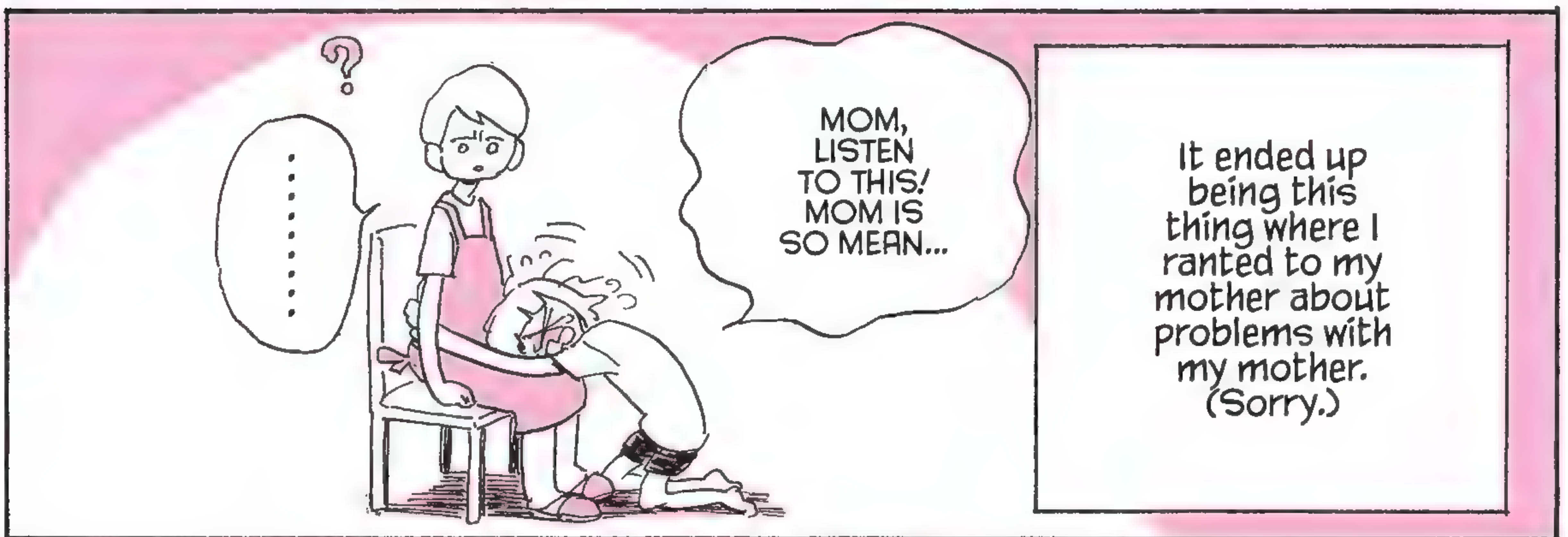
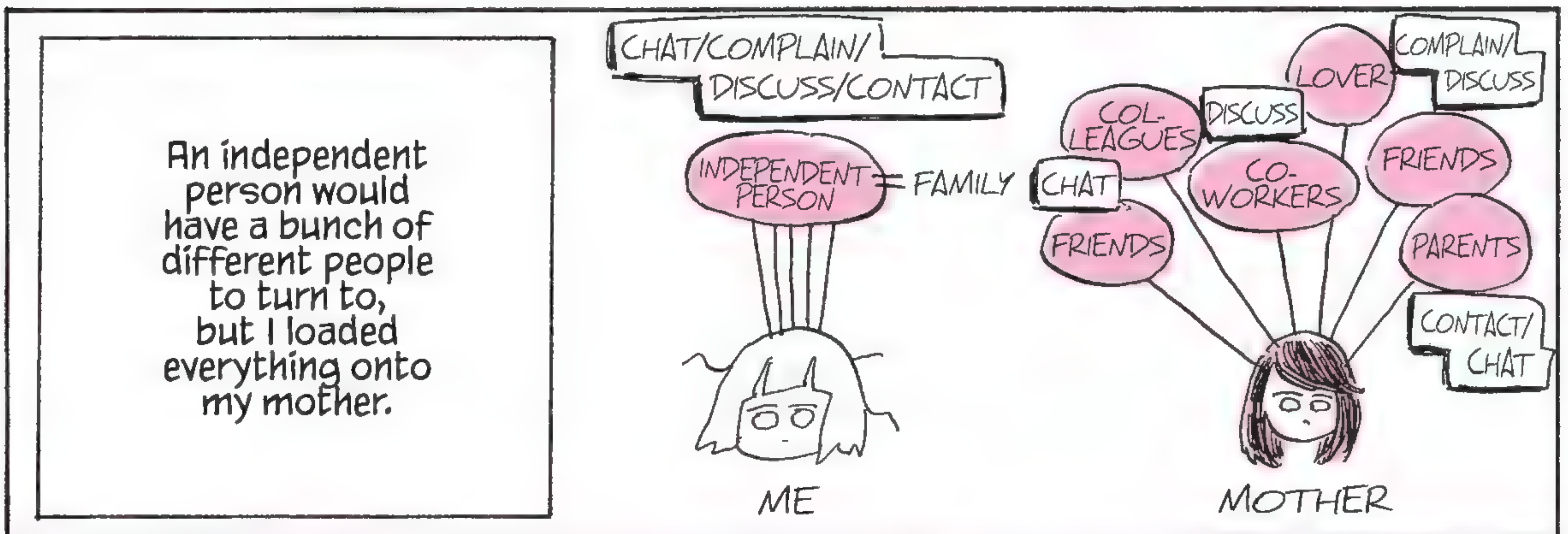
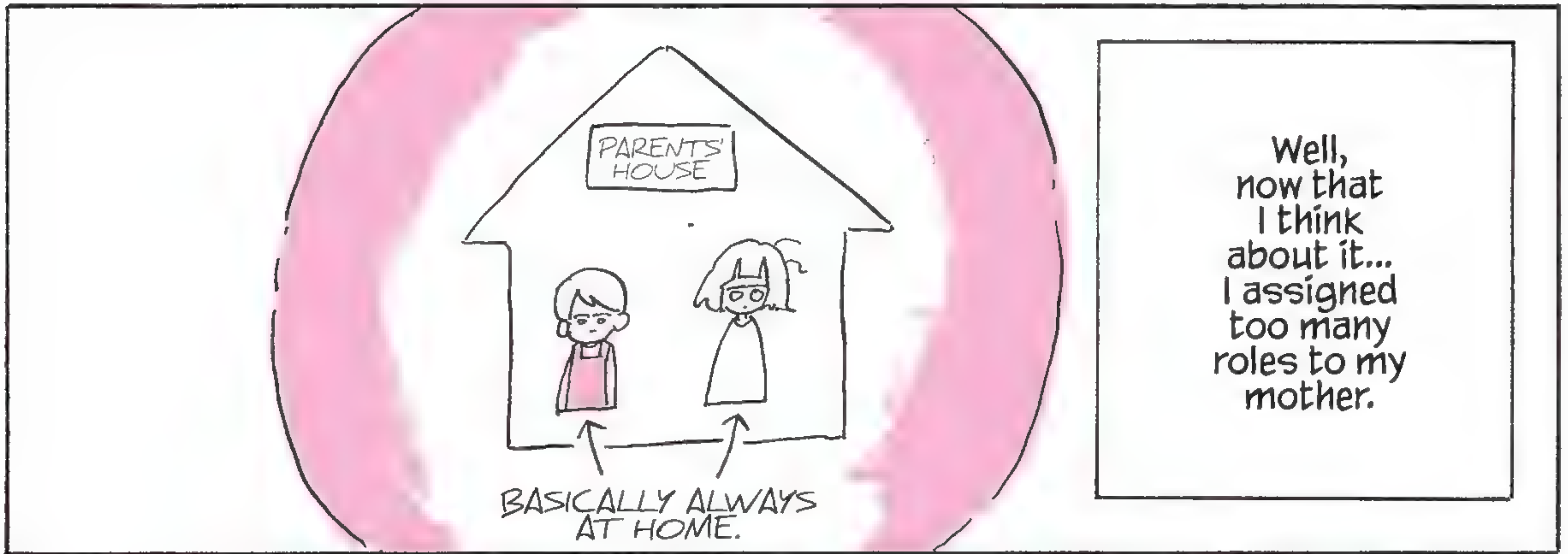
So, I thought I had no right to be struggling or in pain.

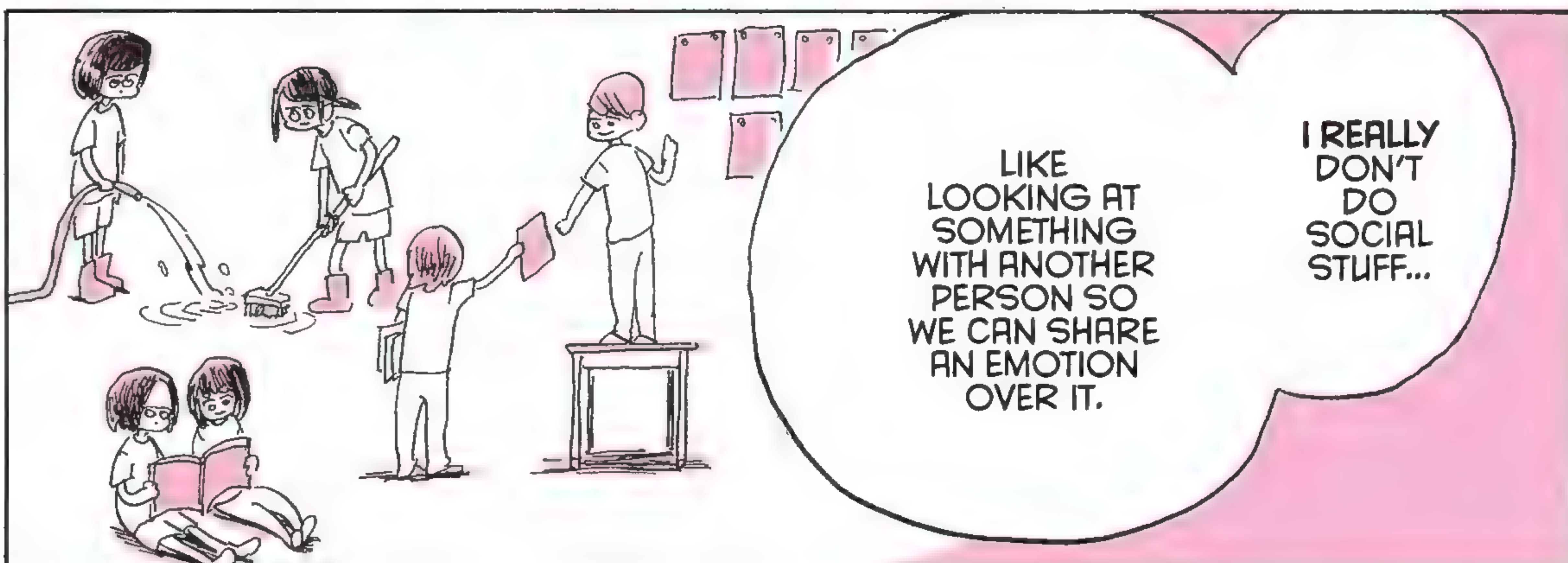
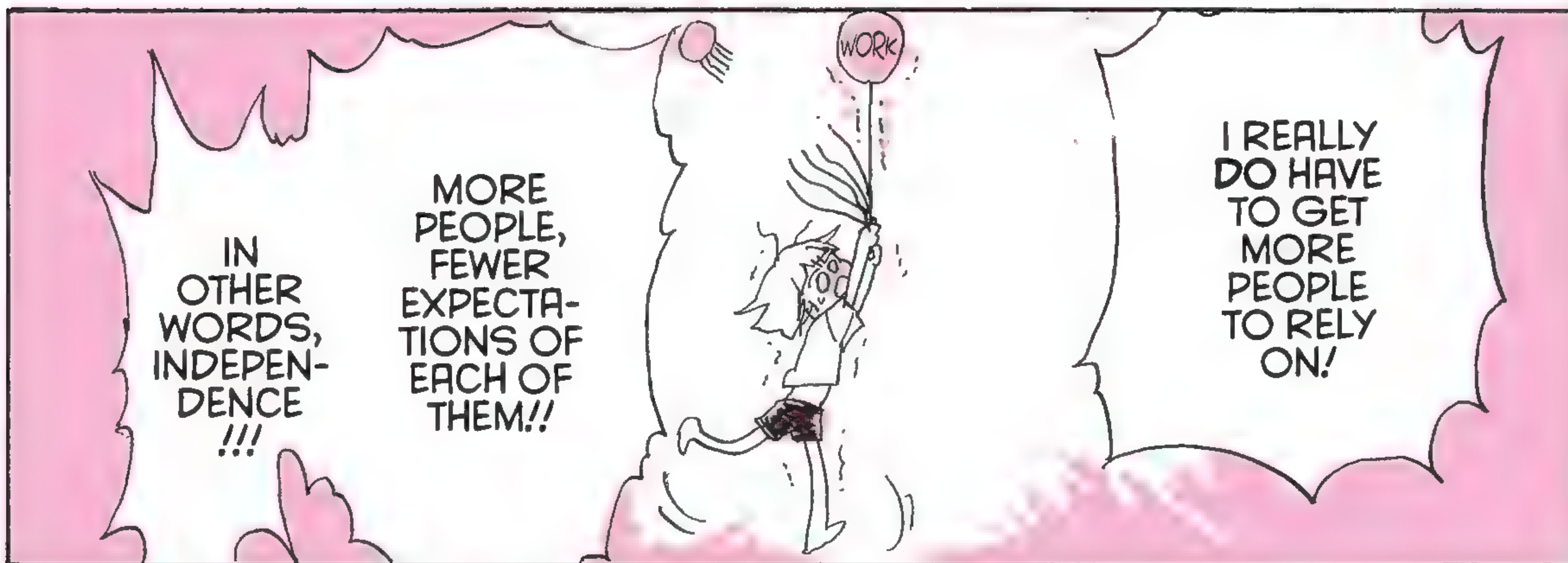


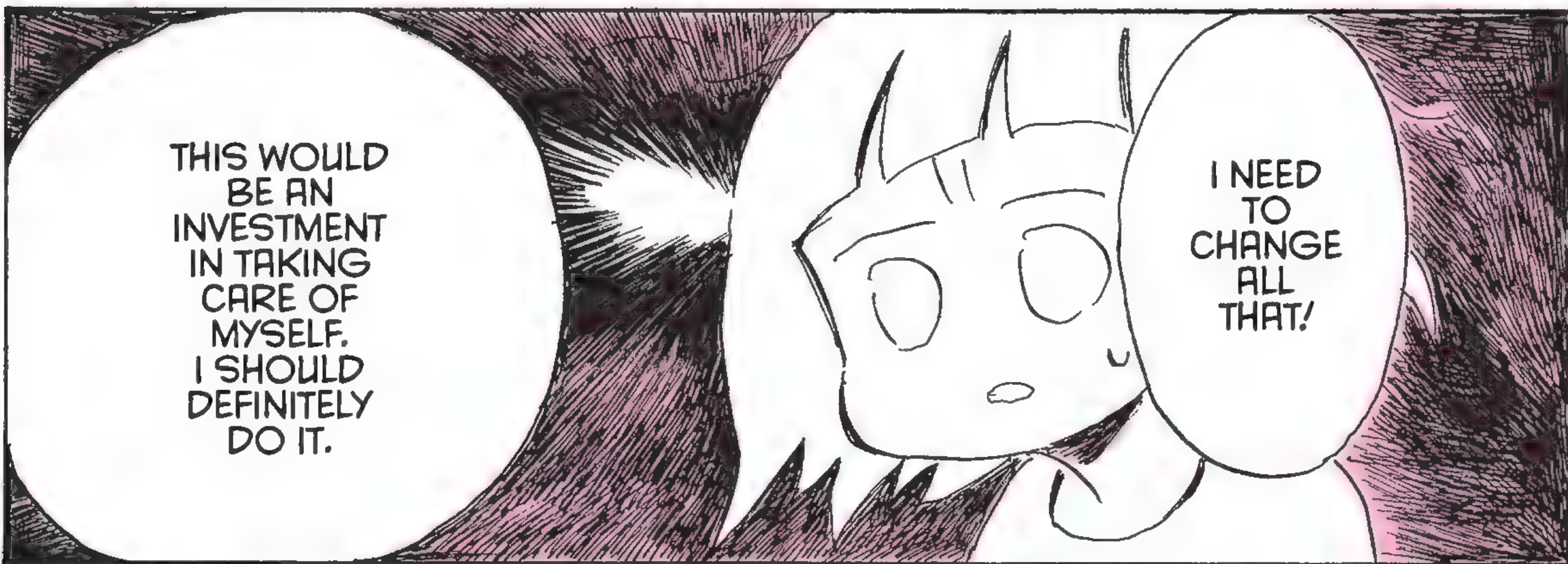
I basically ignored it, but still-- it really was hard. It really *did* hurt.





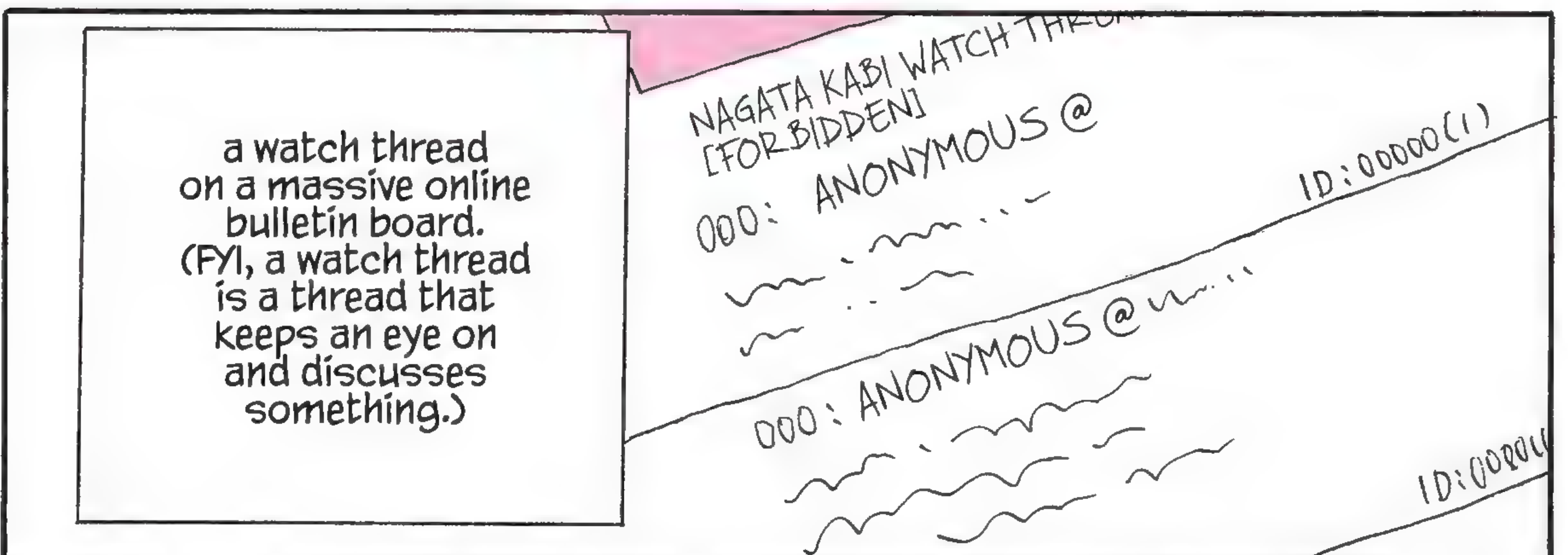
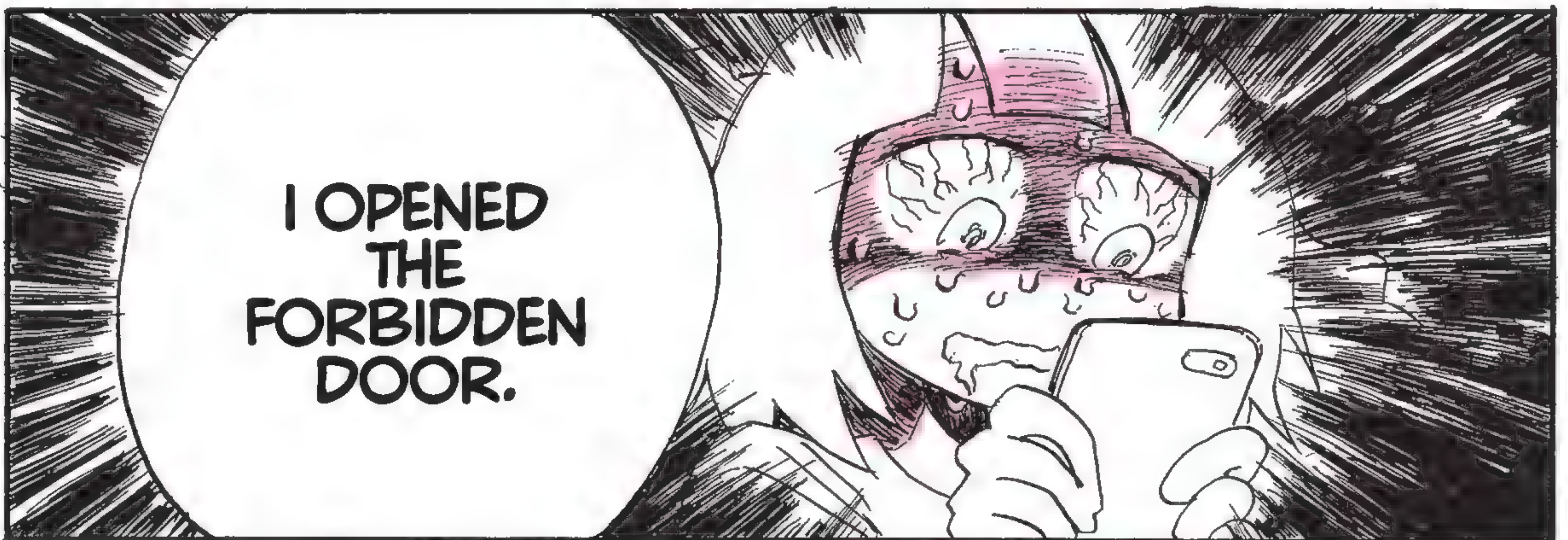
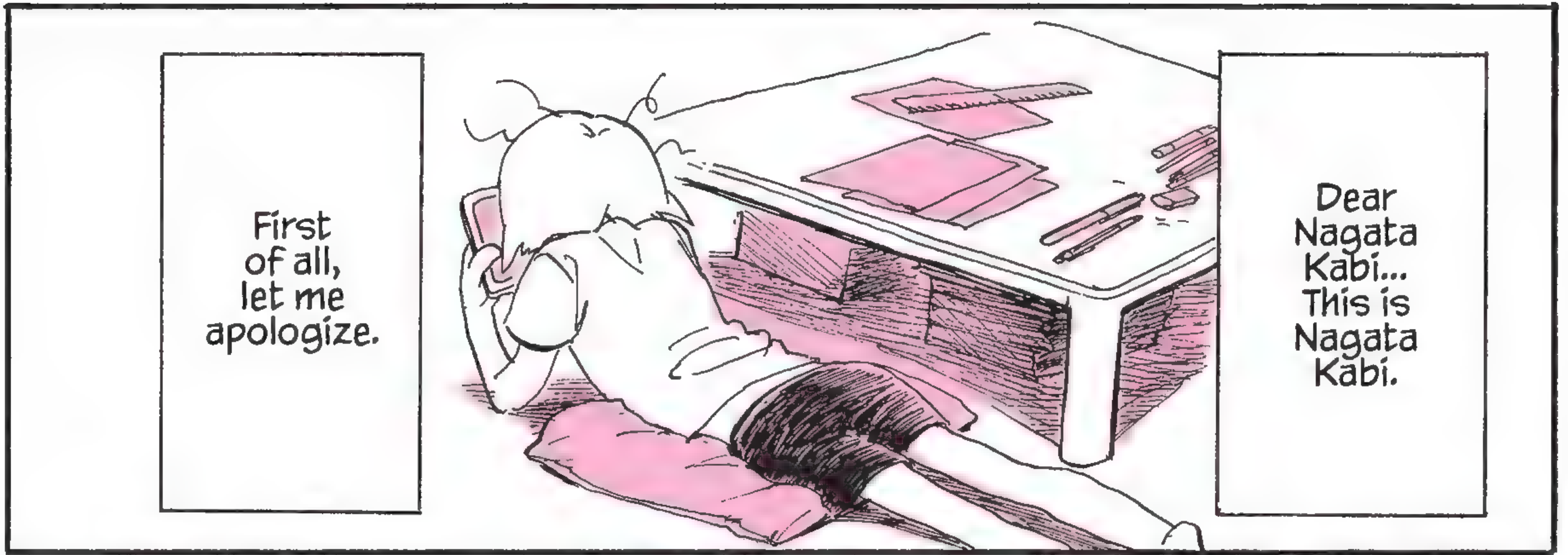


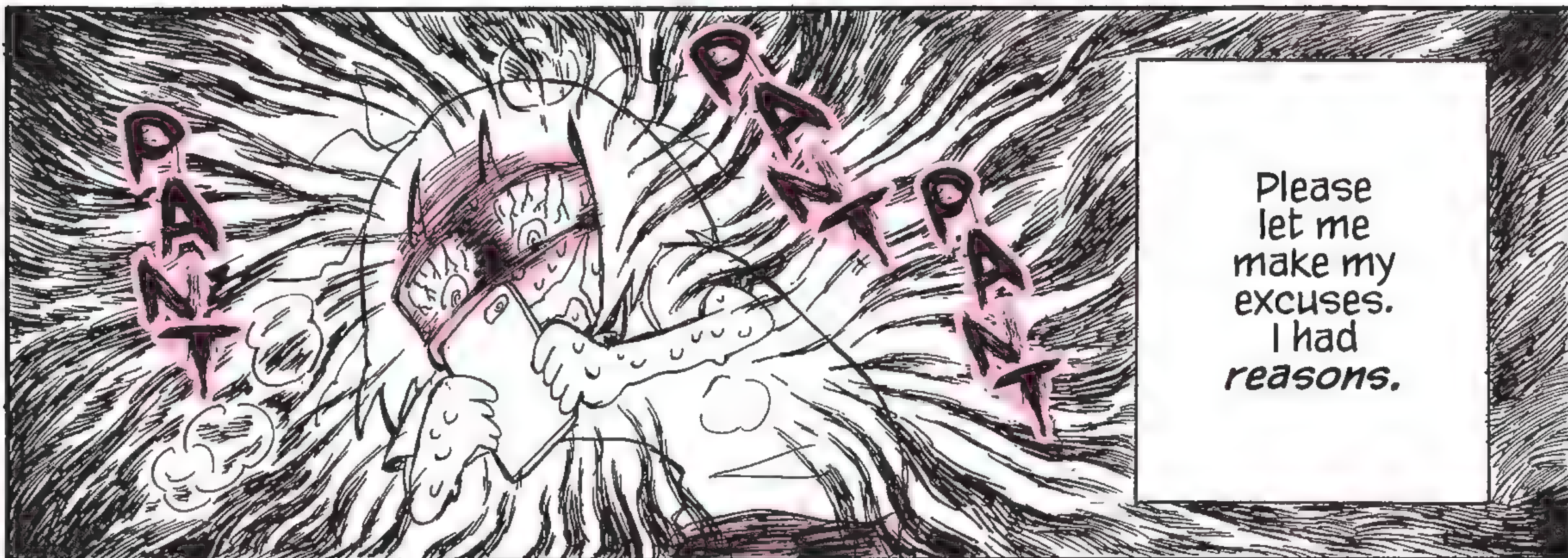






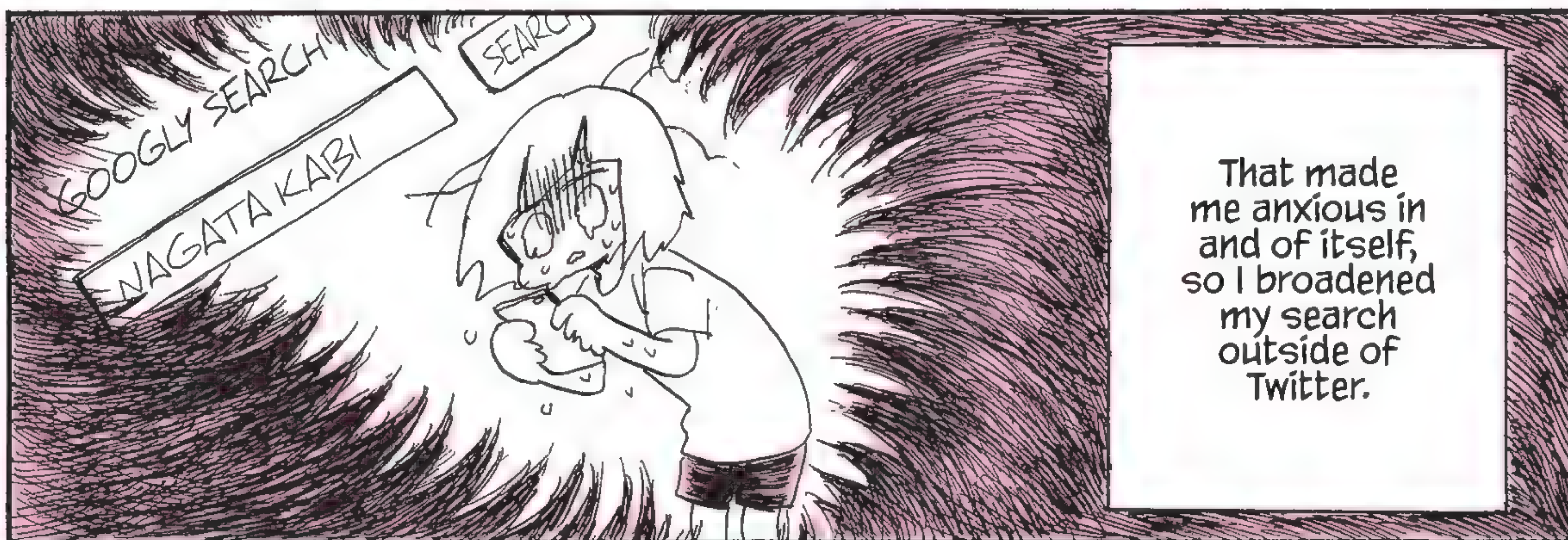
My
Solo
Exchange
Diary





Please
let me
make my
excuses.
I had
reasons.

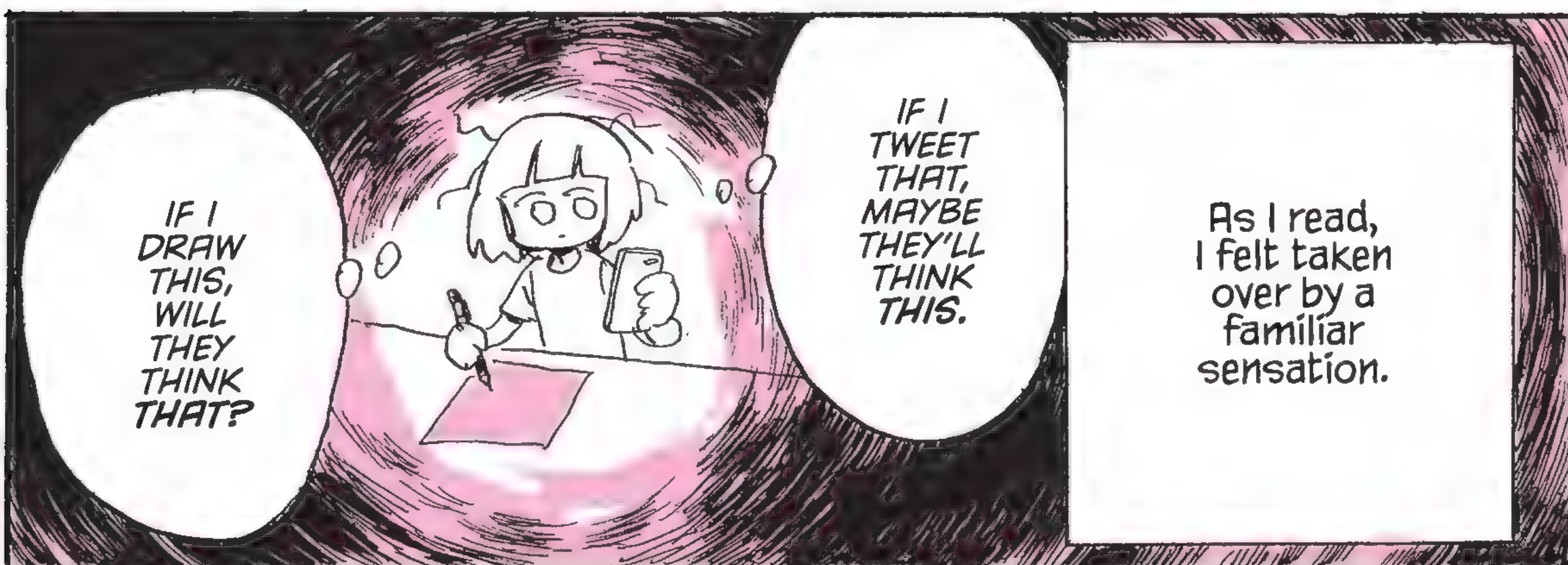
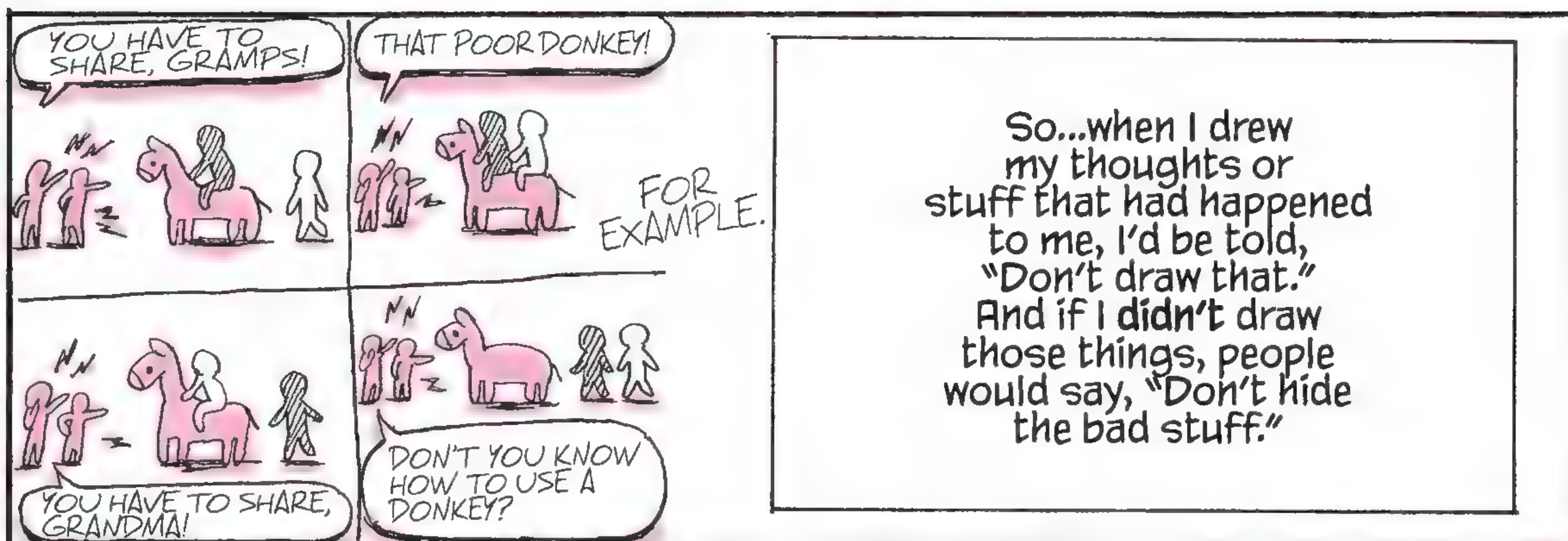
Maybe
because I was
searching for
myself on Twitter,
I wasn't getting
any *really*
negative
opinions.

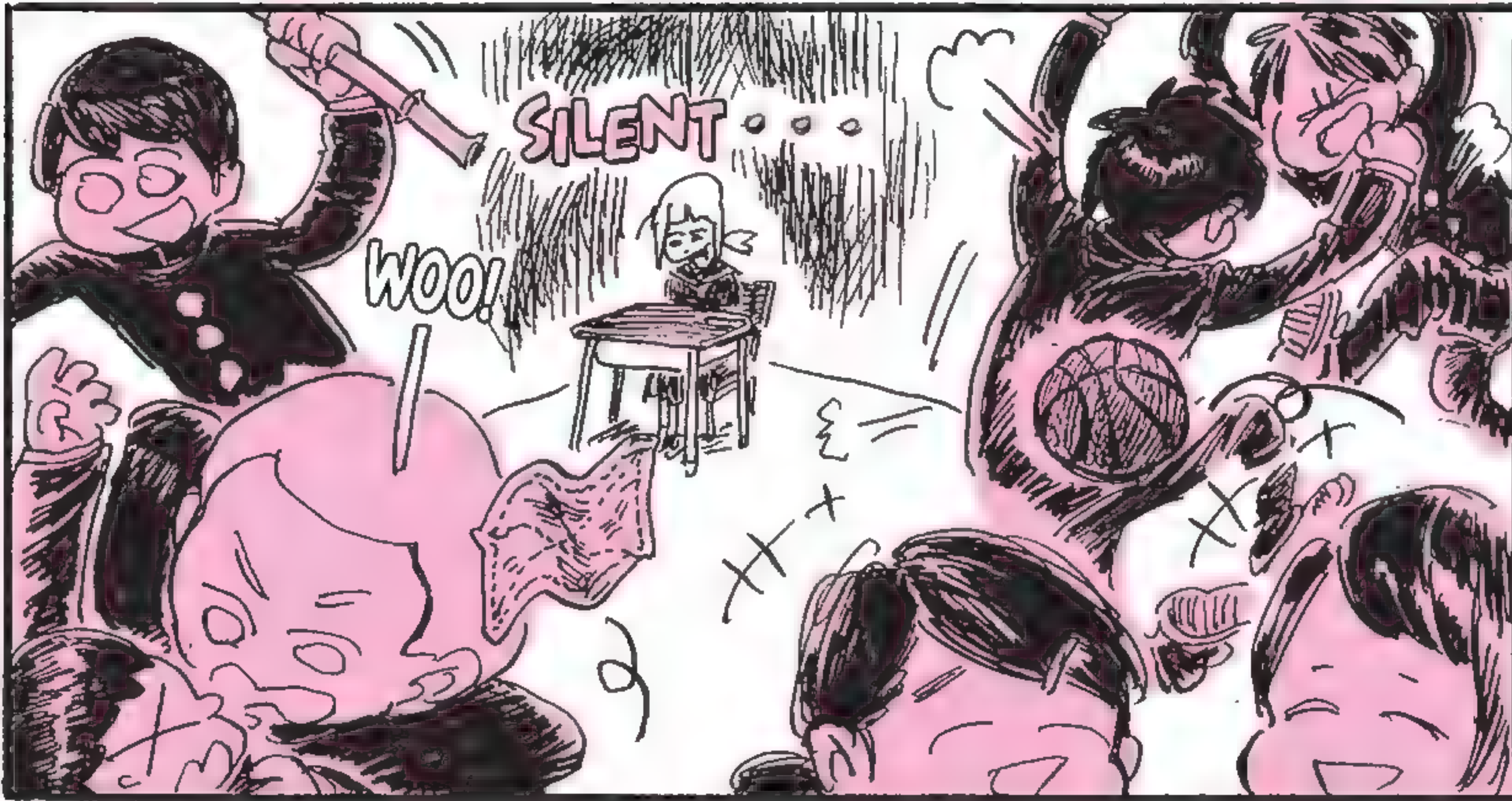


That made
me anxious in
and of itself,
so I broadened
my search
outside of
Twitter.

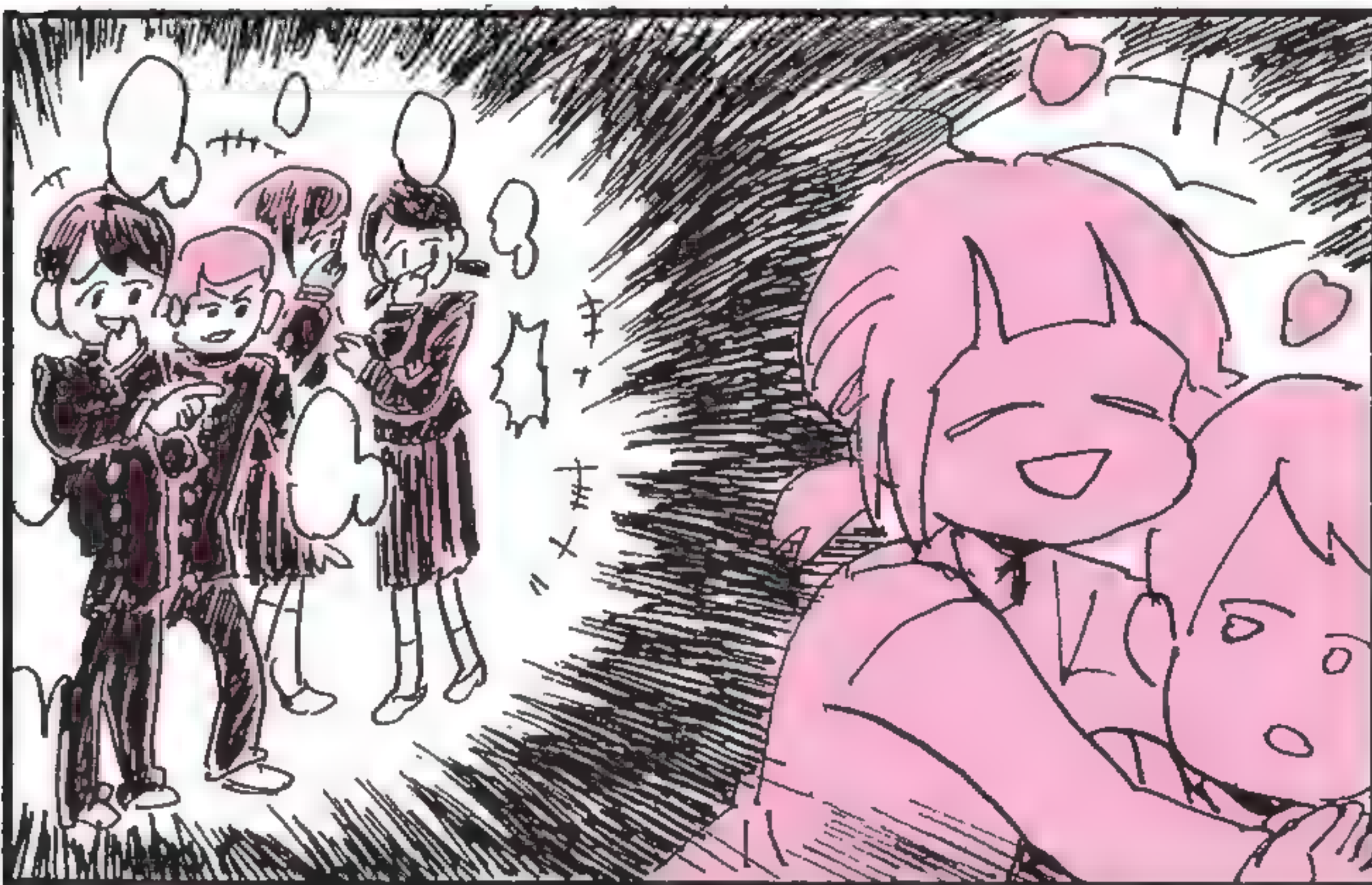
And that's
where I found it:
a captivating
world where
people did
nothing but
observe and
discuss me!!







When I was in junior high, I hid myself so I wouldn't stand out.



When I went home, I felt like my classmates were watching me from somewhere, laughing as they saw how different I was in my house.

I felt that way back in my parents' house during my part-timer days, too--when they watched and commented on every little thing I did.



STILL HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING.

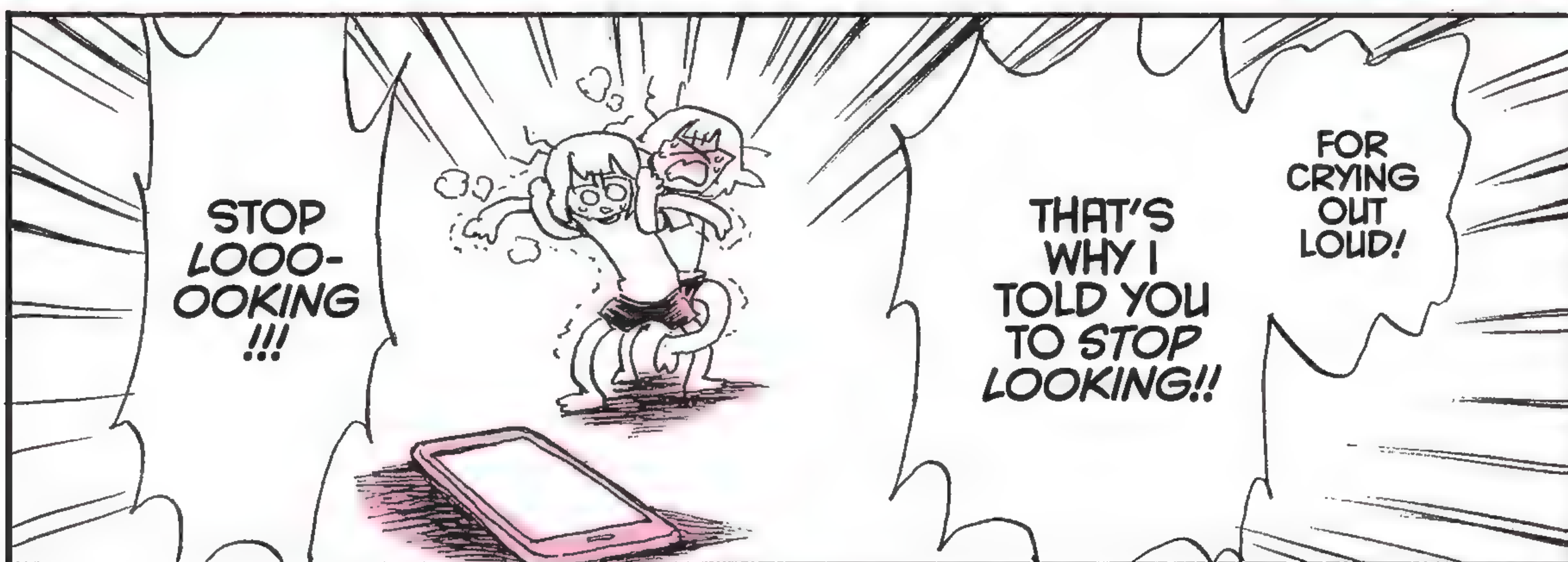
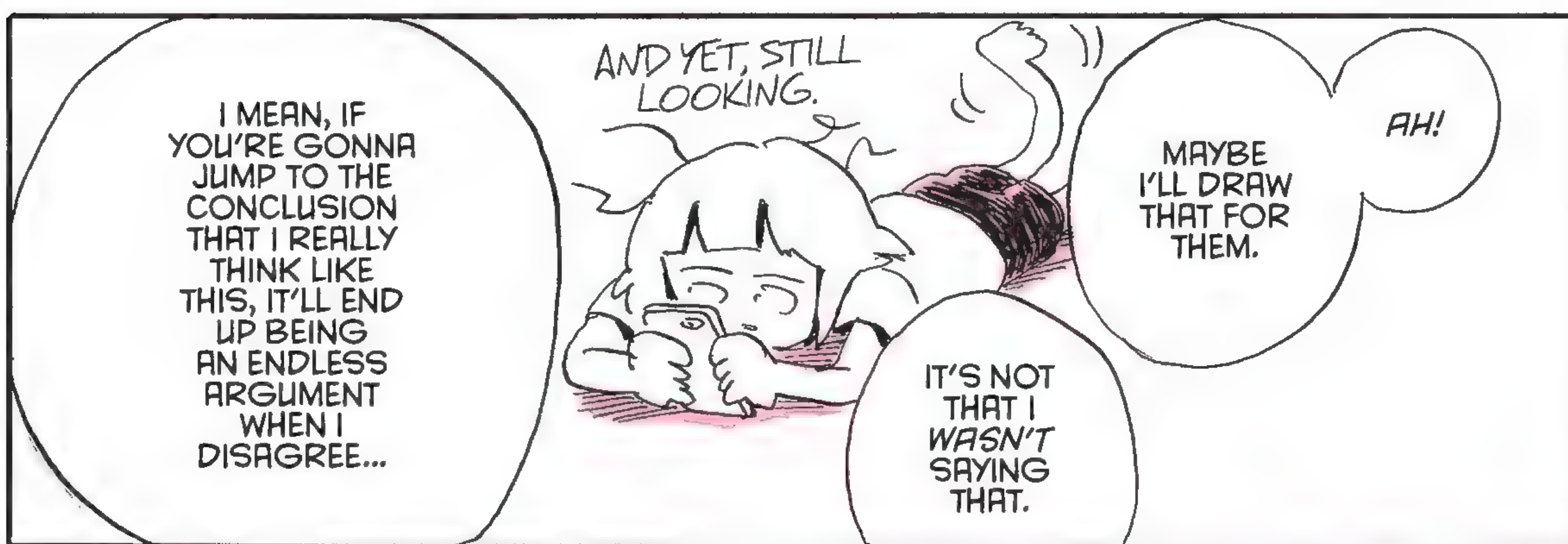
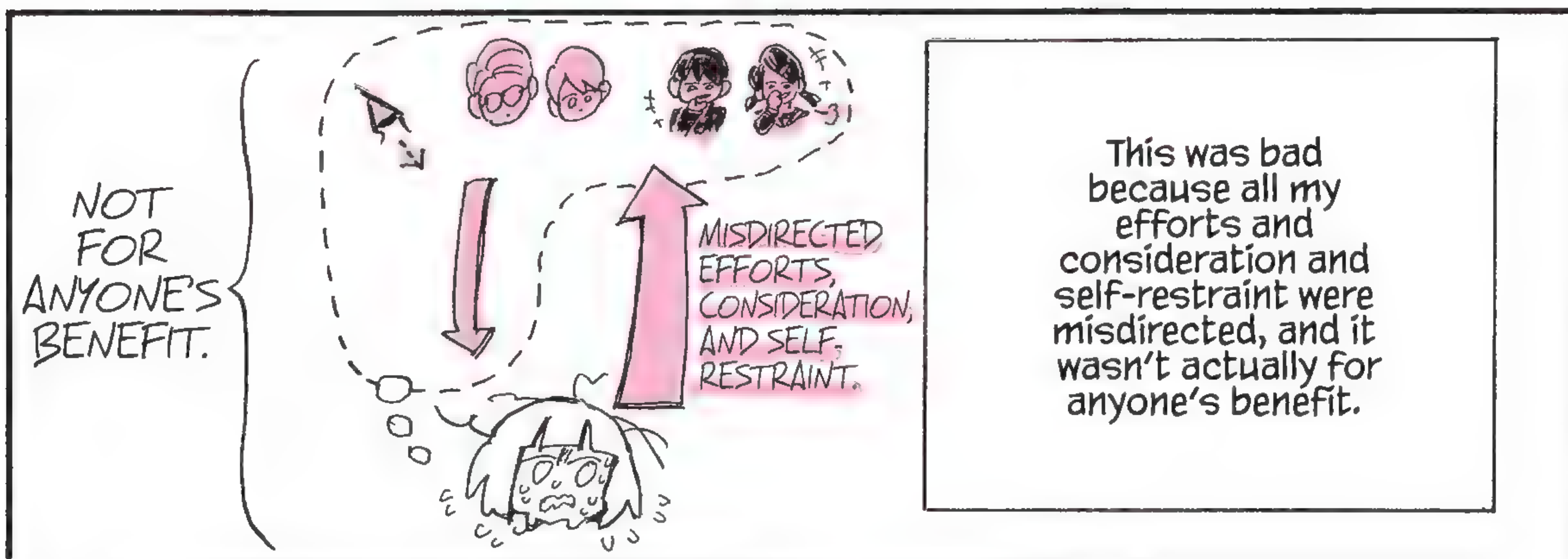
THEY'LL THINK THAT ABOUT THIS...

THEY'LL THINK THIS ABOUT THAT.

I HAVE TO STOP LOOKING!!

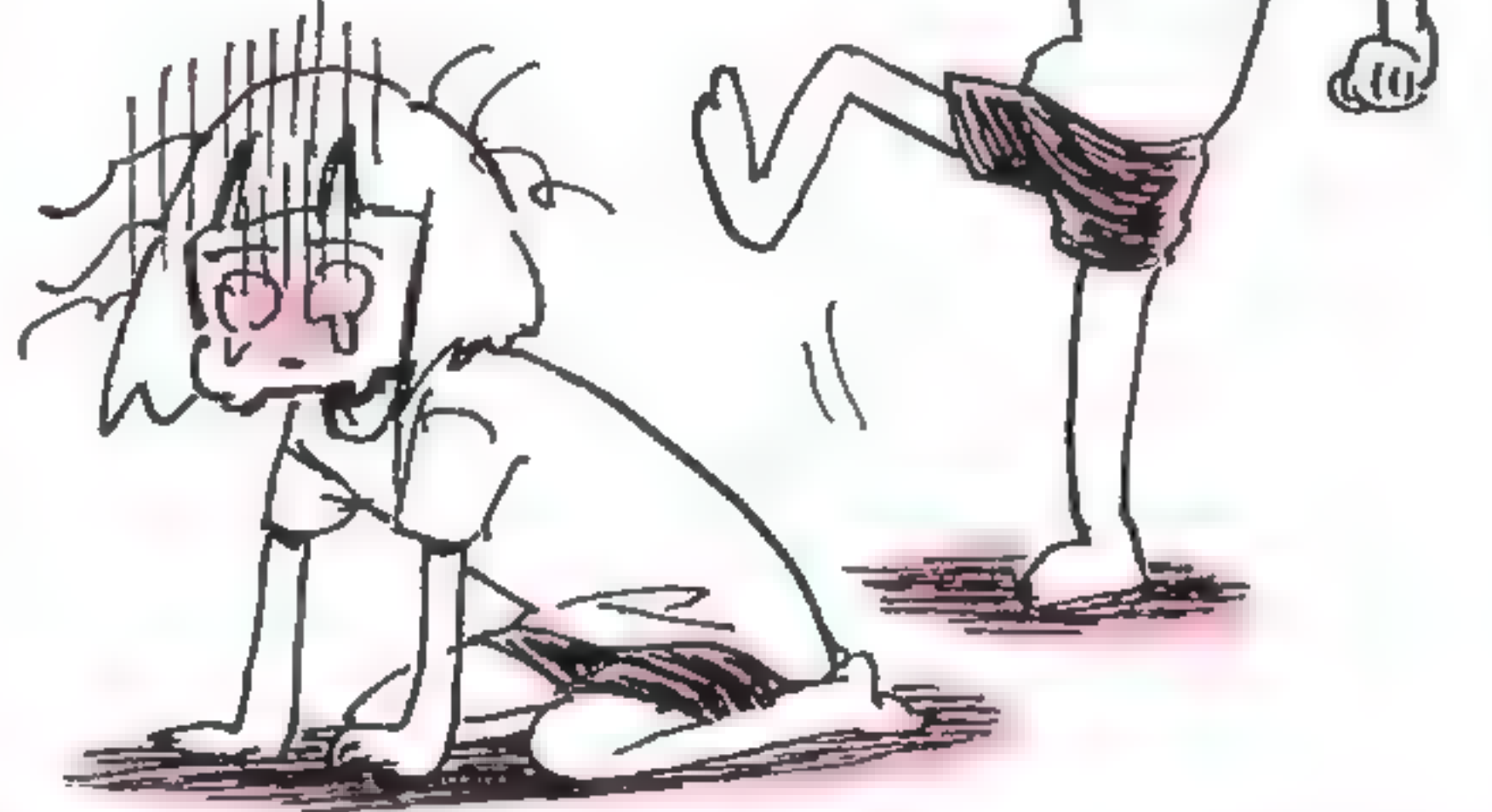
I FOUGHT TO GET MY OWN PLACE, BUT WHAT WAS THE POINT IF I DO THIS AGAIN?!

IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN!



comes from the same place as me not being able to value myself.

NO
MATTER
HOW
HARD I
TRY...



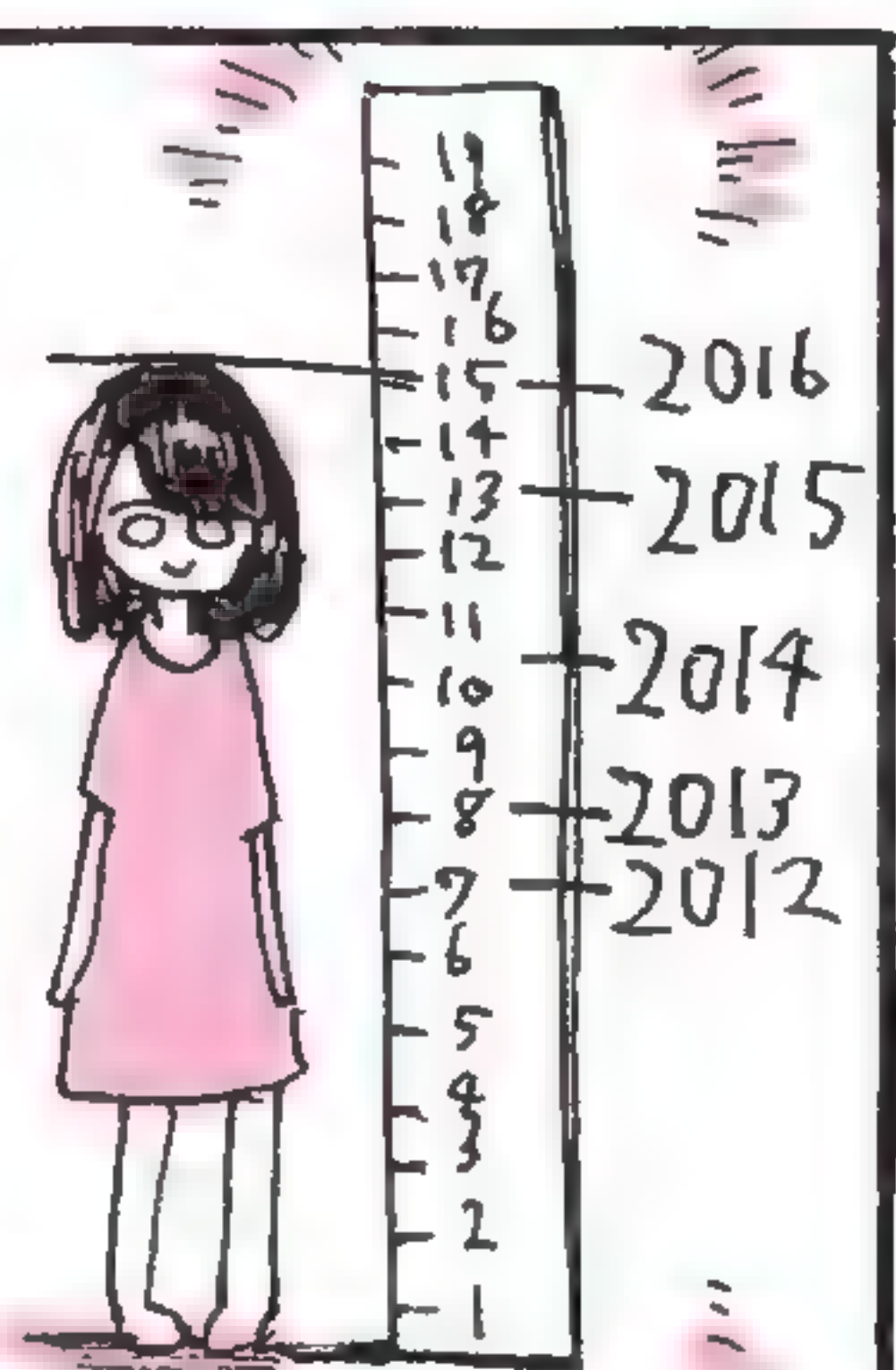
I think that being *this* concerned with what other people think of me...

MEASURING
STICK

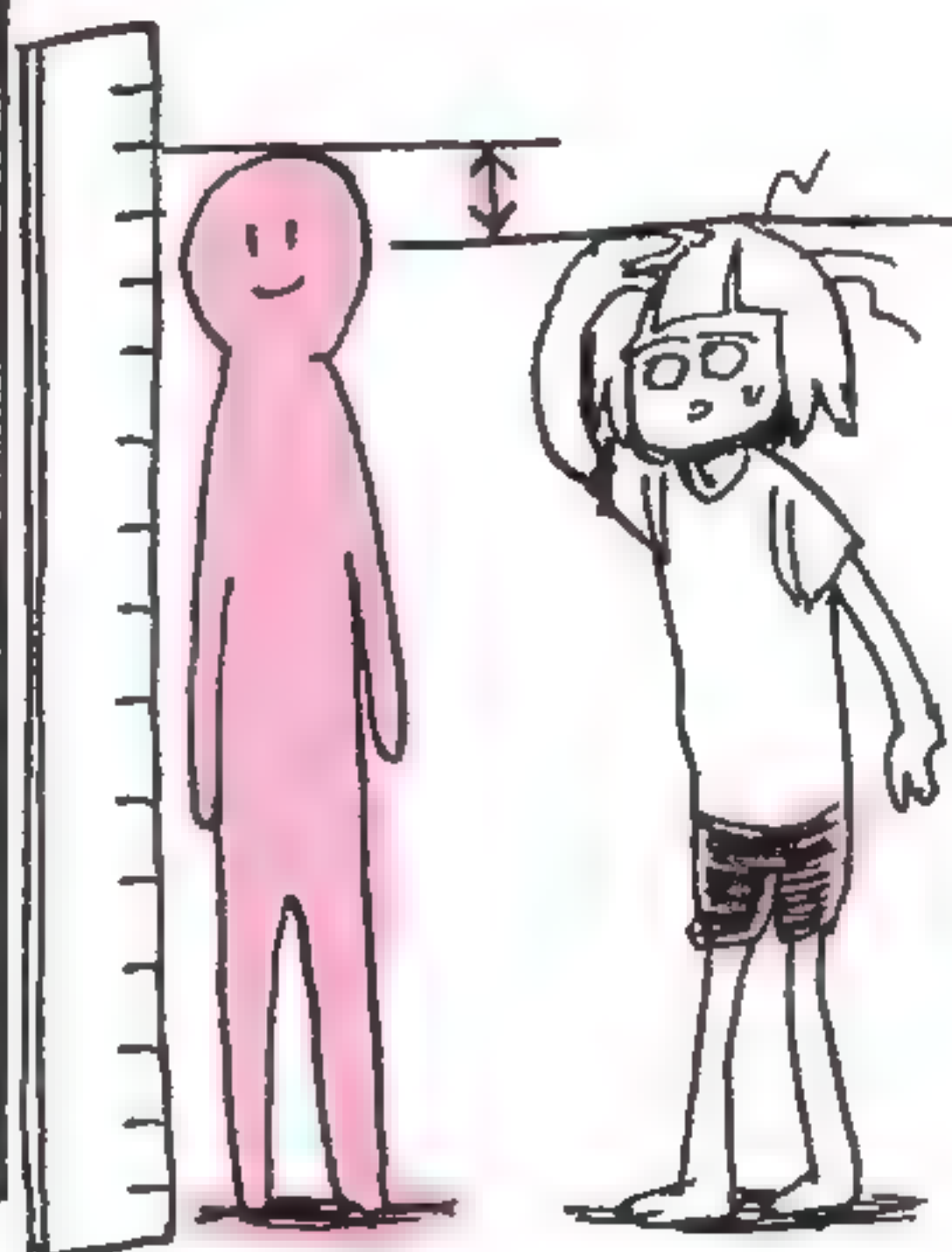


I have no personal measuring stick.

Without that personal measuring stick, how can you assess yourself? You don't know your own pace or growth on the scale of what you're capable of. It drags down your ability to self-evaluate.

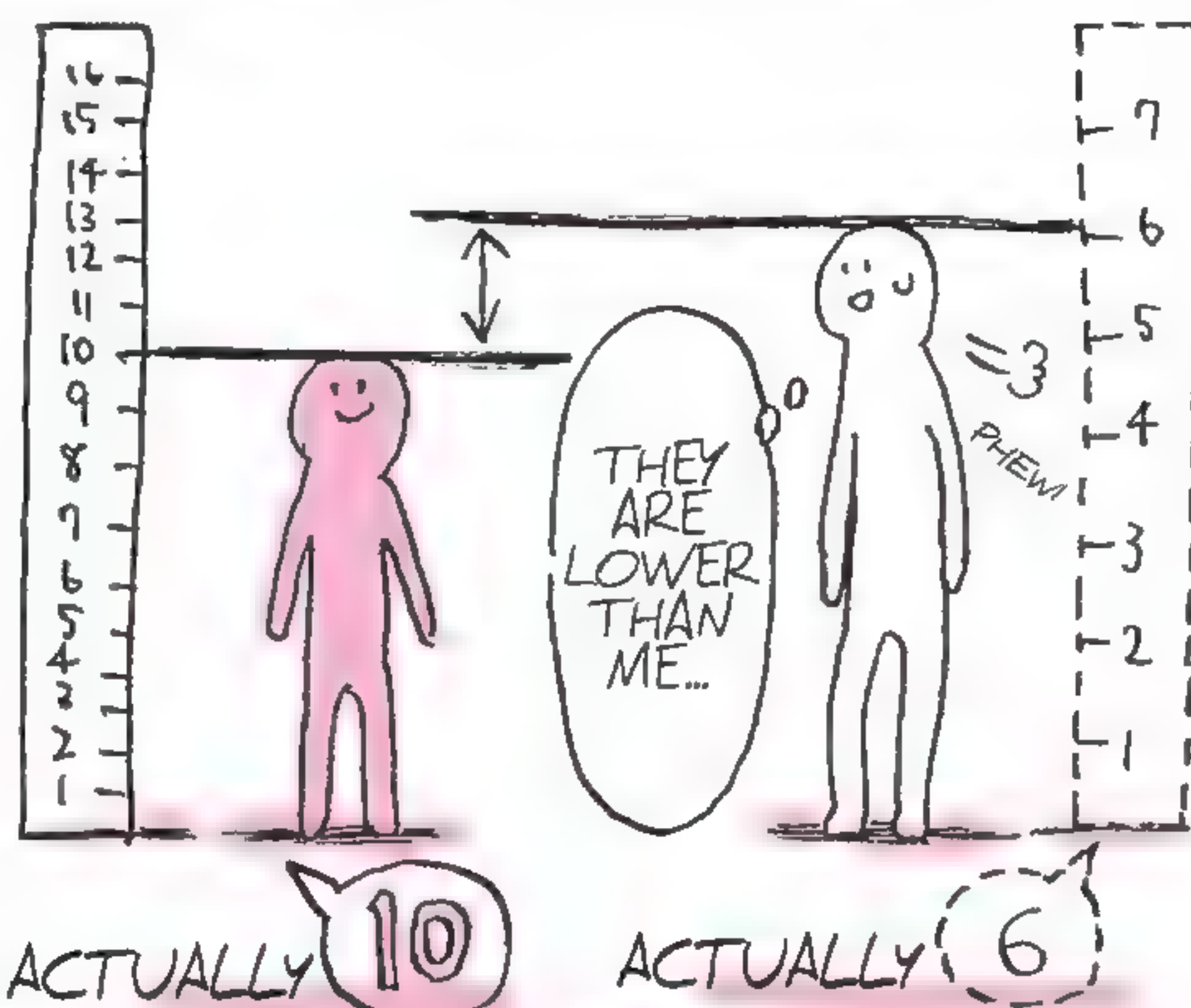


But since you don't have the tool to measure yourself against yourself, you compare yourself to other people.



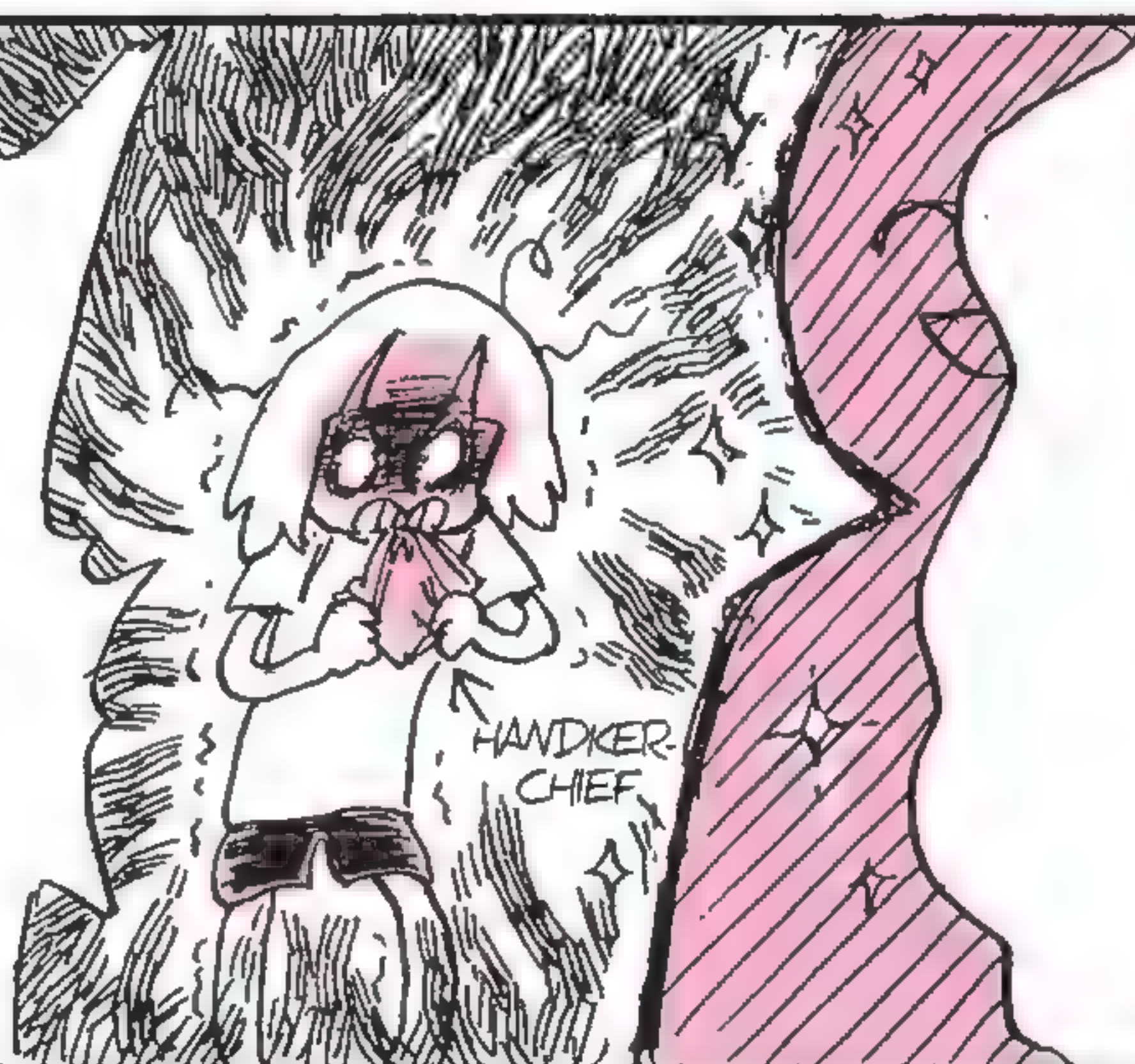
Someone without that personal measuring stick is anxious about whether they have enough value to even be allowed to live.

even when
you're just
comparing the
size of stuff you
can see, the scale
is different for
different people.
It's pointless.



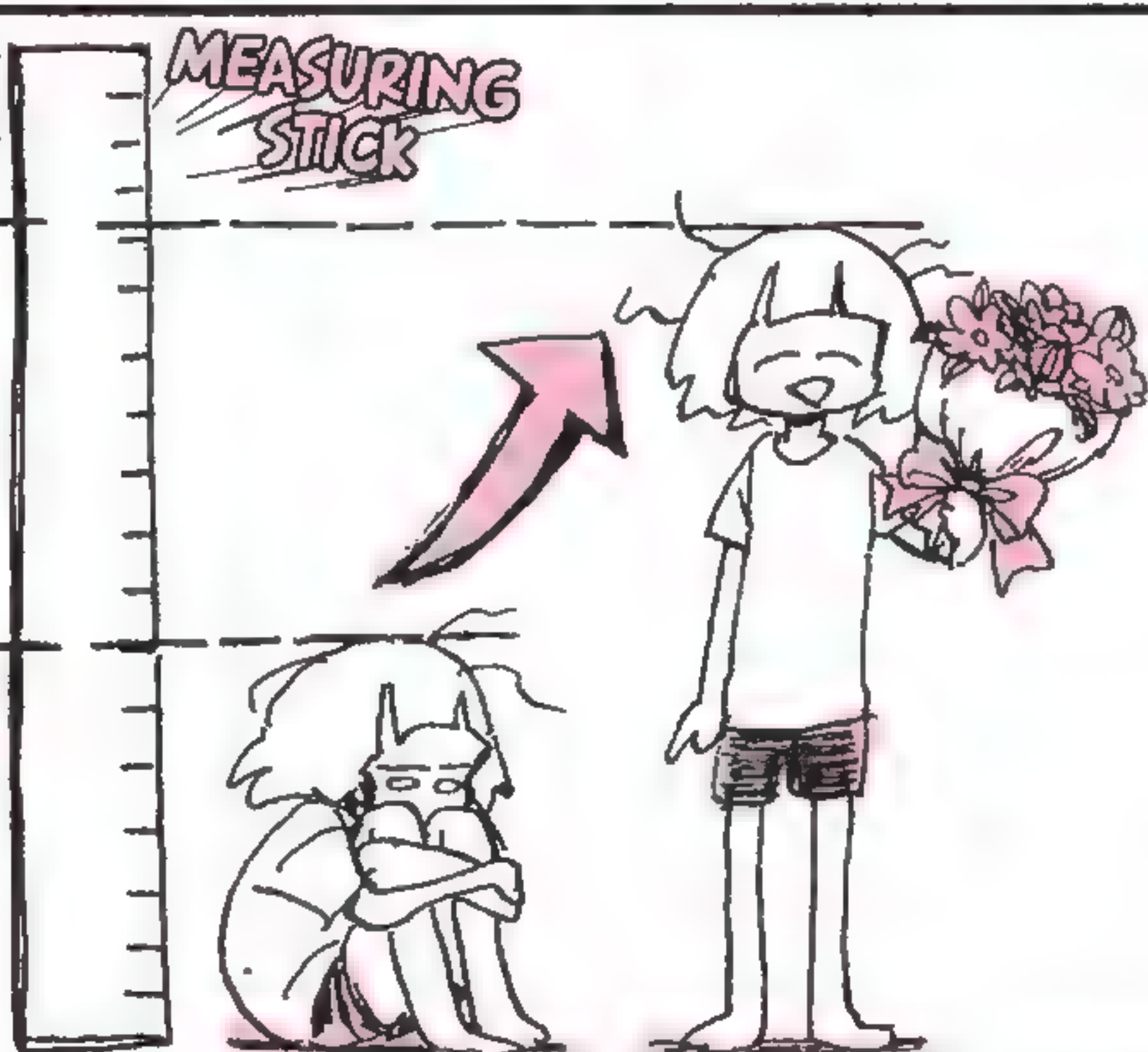
When
you
do
that...

BECAUSE
I DON'T
HAVE
MY OWN
MEASURING
STICK!!



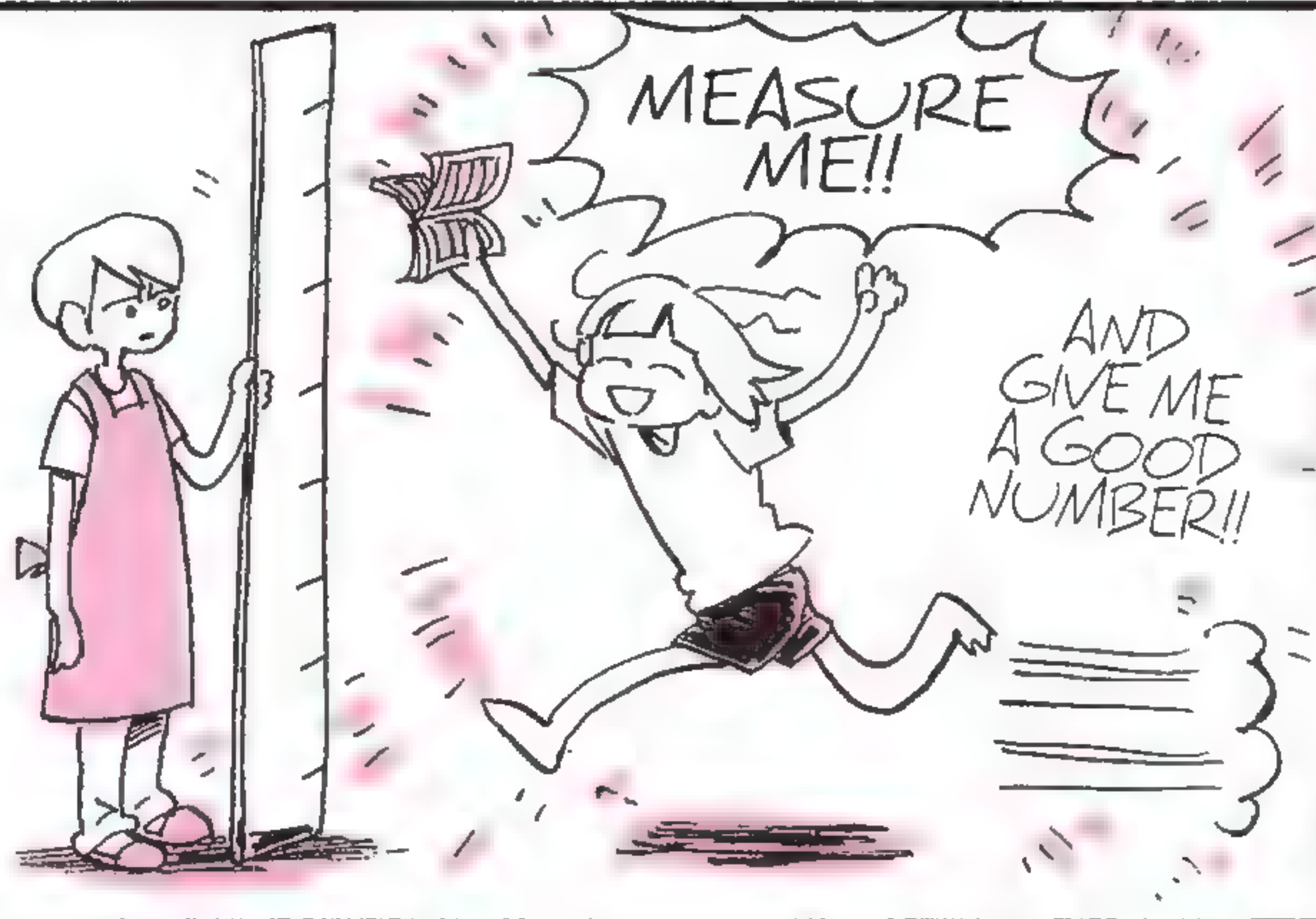
ISN'T THIS
THAT THING
WHERE I'M
HYPER-AWARE
OF OTHER
PEOPLE, COMPARE
MYSELF TO THEM,
AND THEN GET
JEALOUS?!

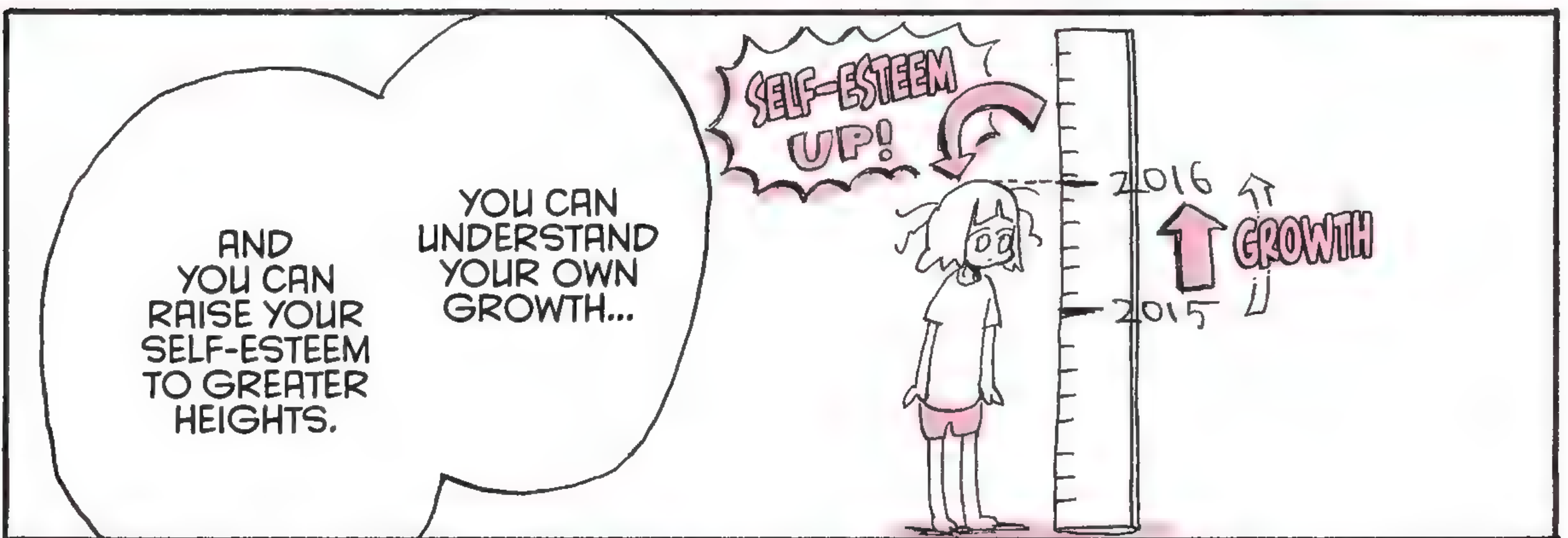
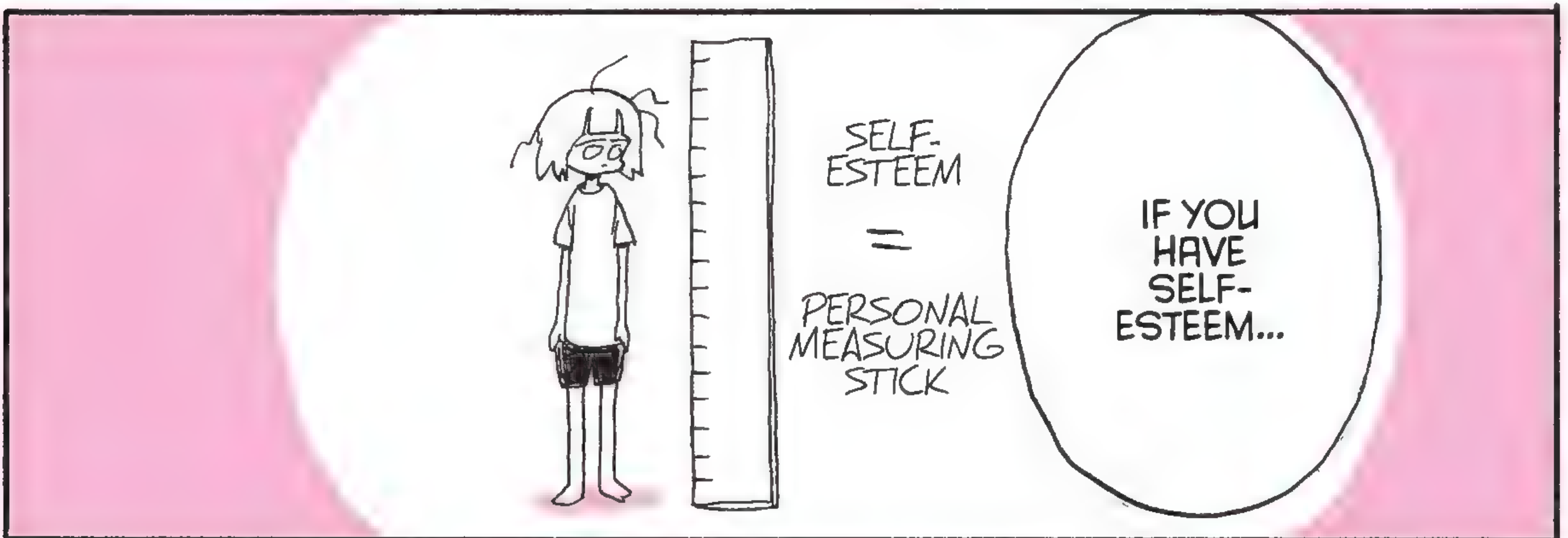
MY
MEASURING
STICK
PUT
OUT A
BOOK.
NO
ACTUAL
RESULTS
OF ANY
KIND

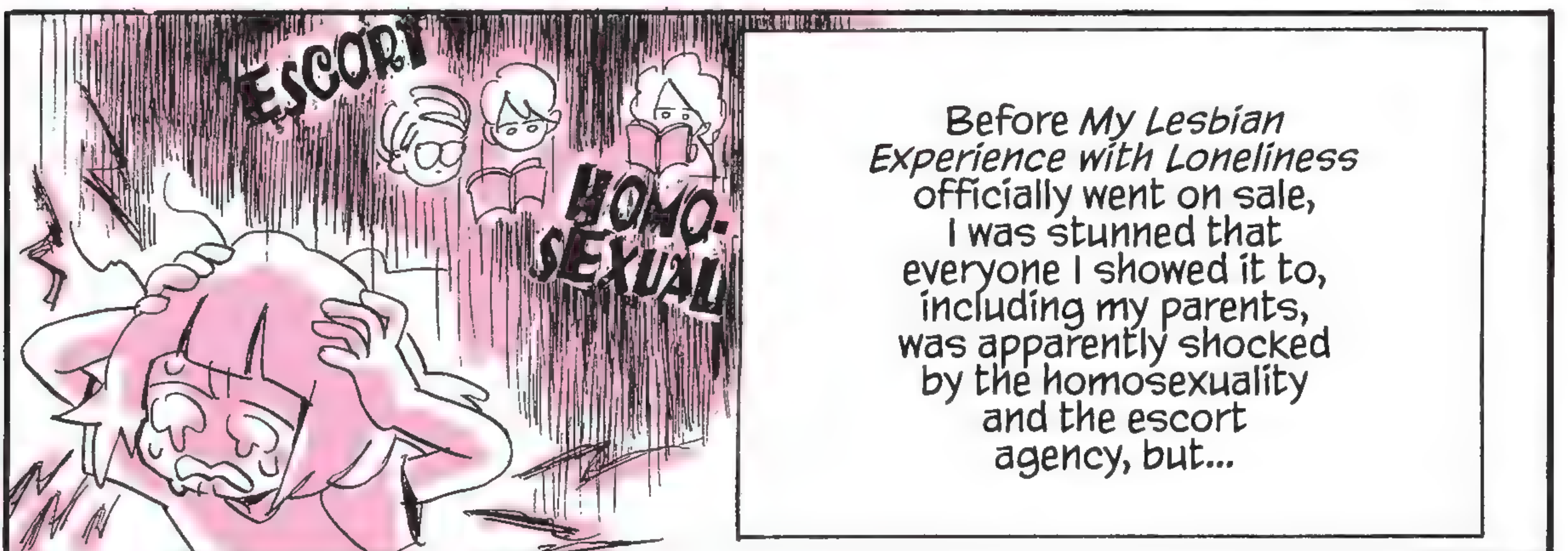
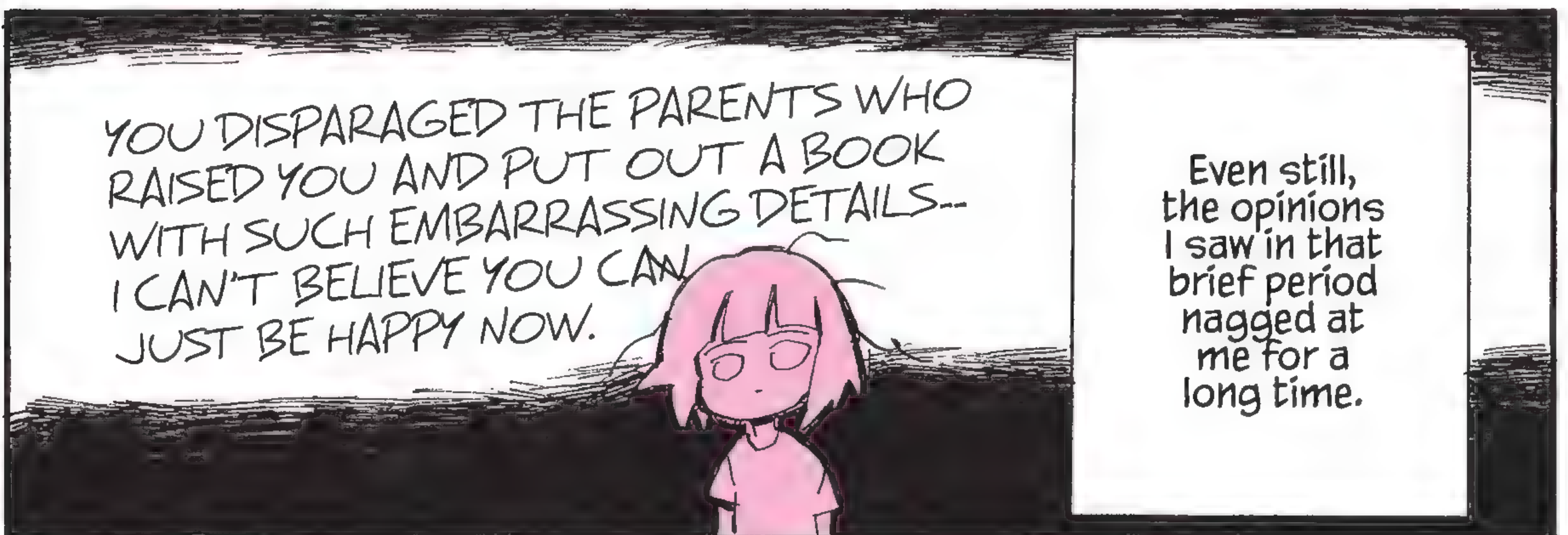
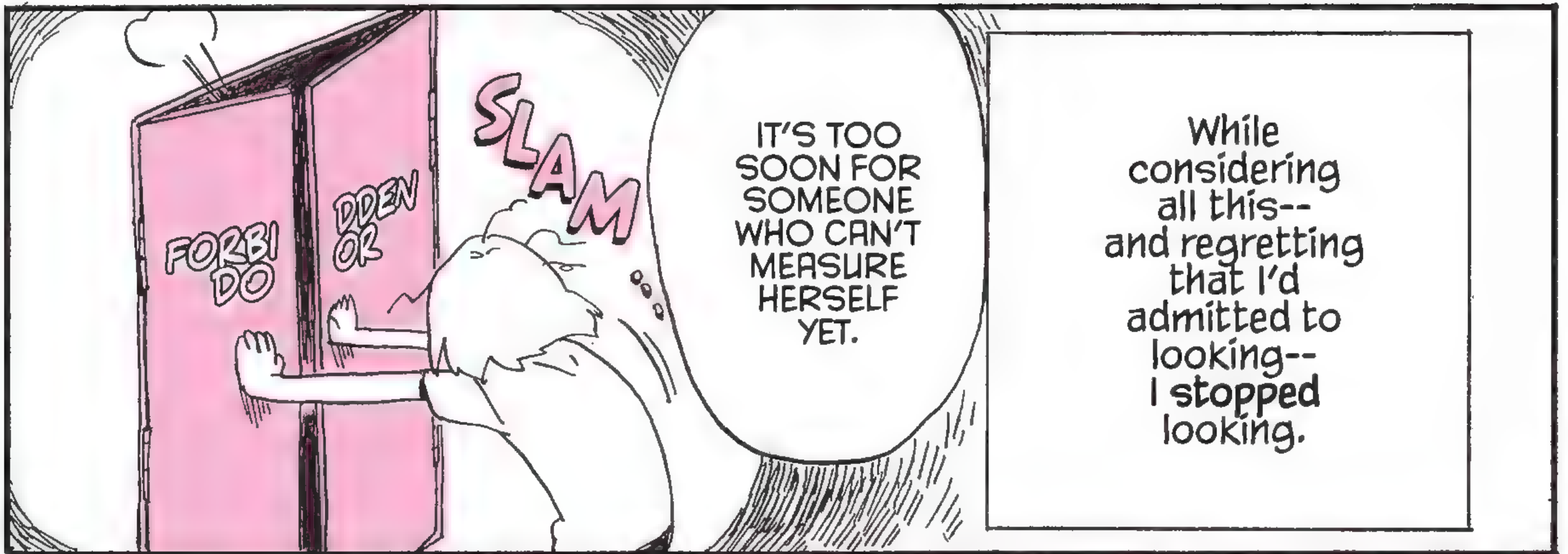


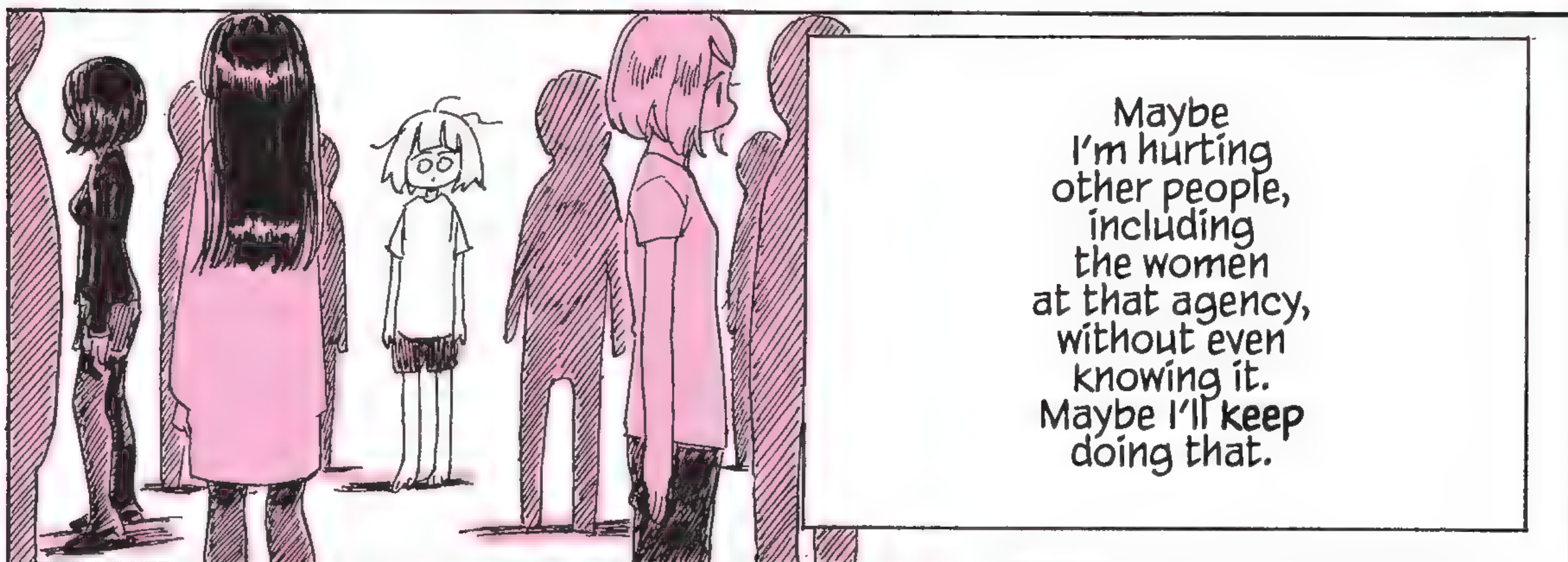
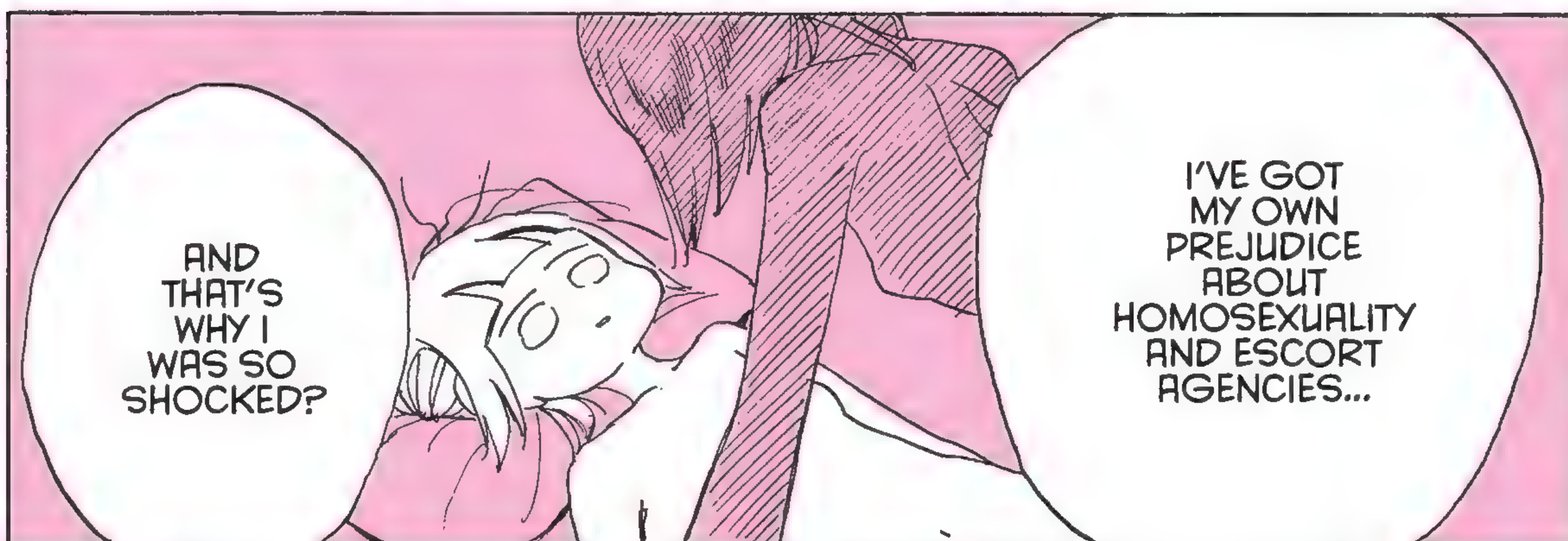
I couldn't be
happy about my
book launch and its
positive reception,
but that would've
made me happy if
I'd had my own
measuring stick.

I measured
myself with
my parents'
measuring stick
and waited
for them to
assign me
my value.





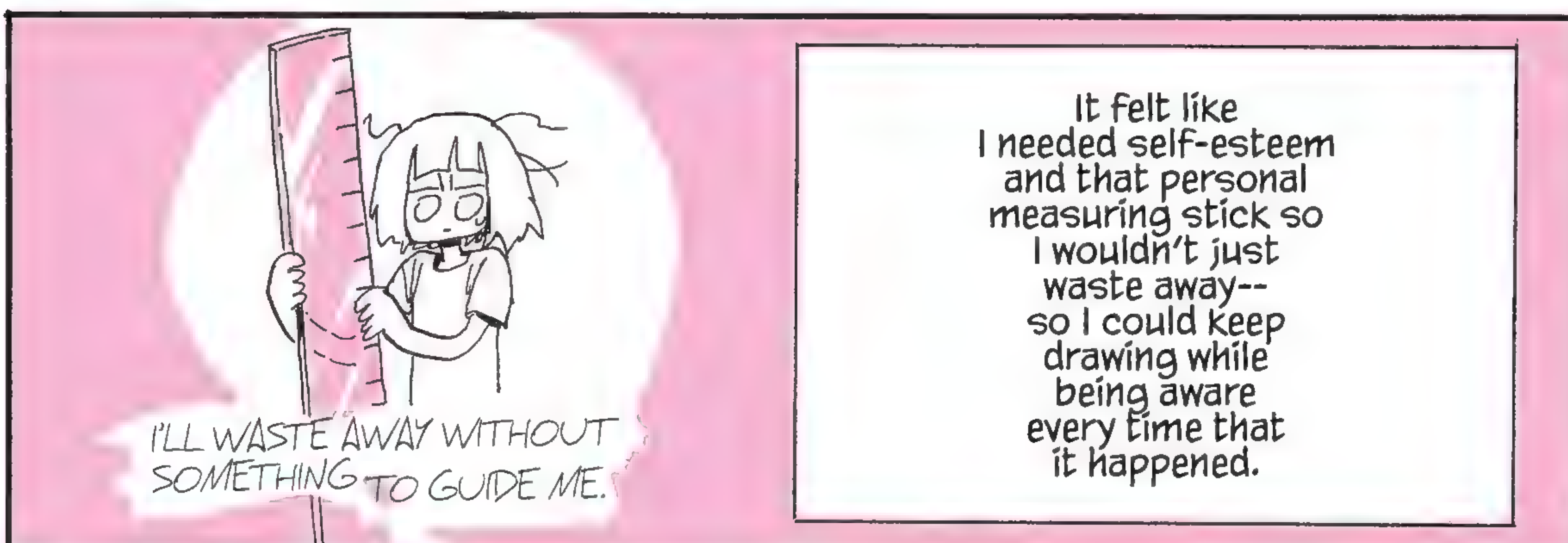






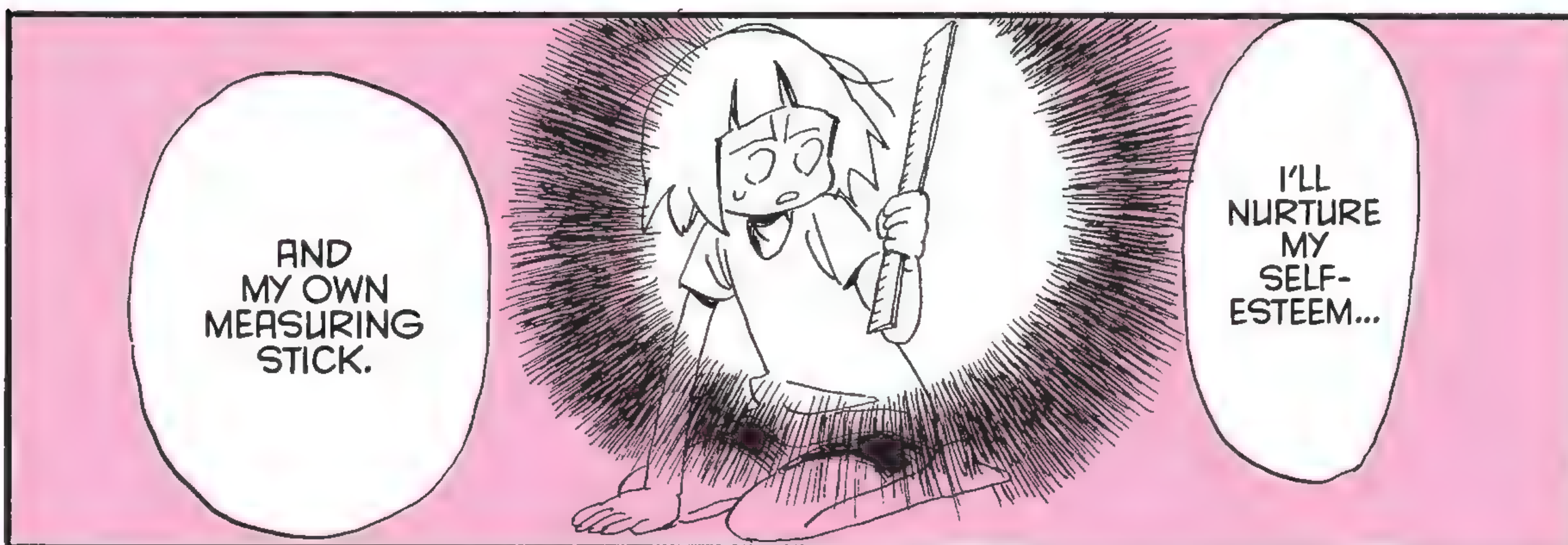
WELL...
NOTHING.
ALL I CAN
DO IS
BE AWARE
EVERY
TIME IT
HAPPENS...

WHAT
AM I
SUPPOSED
TO DO...?



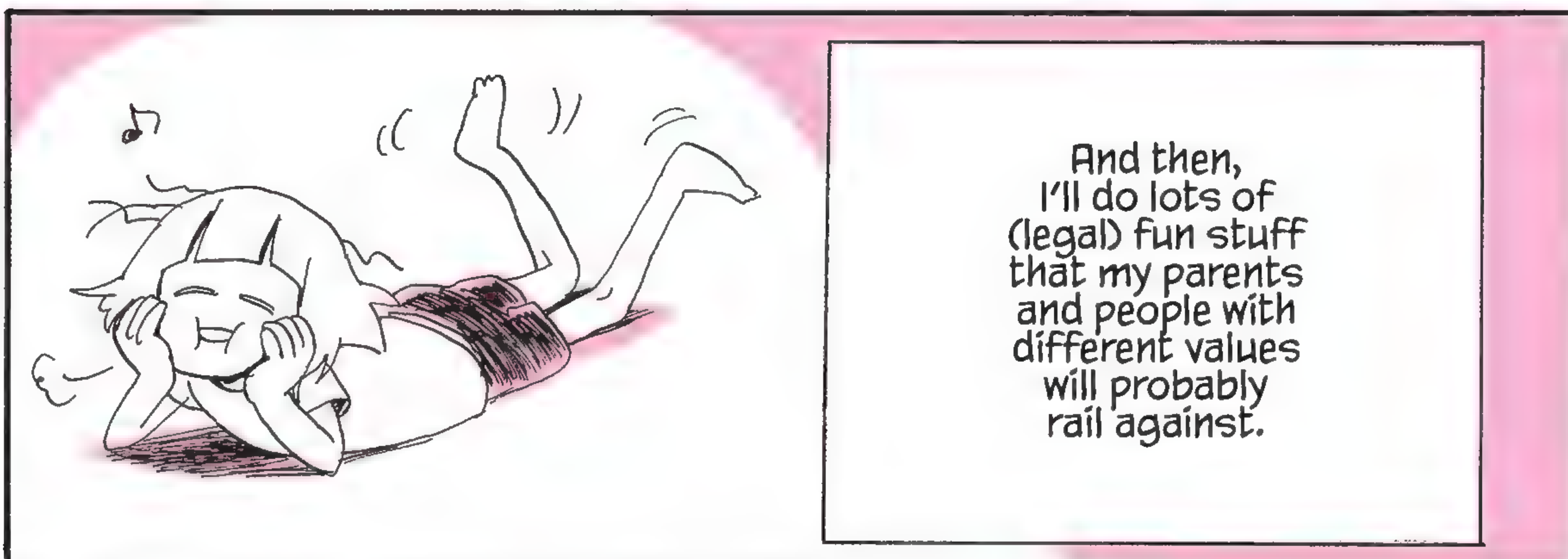
I'LL WASTE AWAY WITHOUT
SOMETHING TO GUIDE ME.

It felt like
I needed self-esteem
and that personal
measuring stick so
I wouldn't just
waste away--
so I could keep
drawing while
being aware
every time that
it happened.

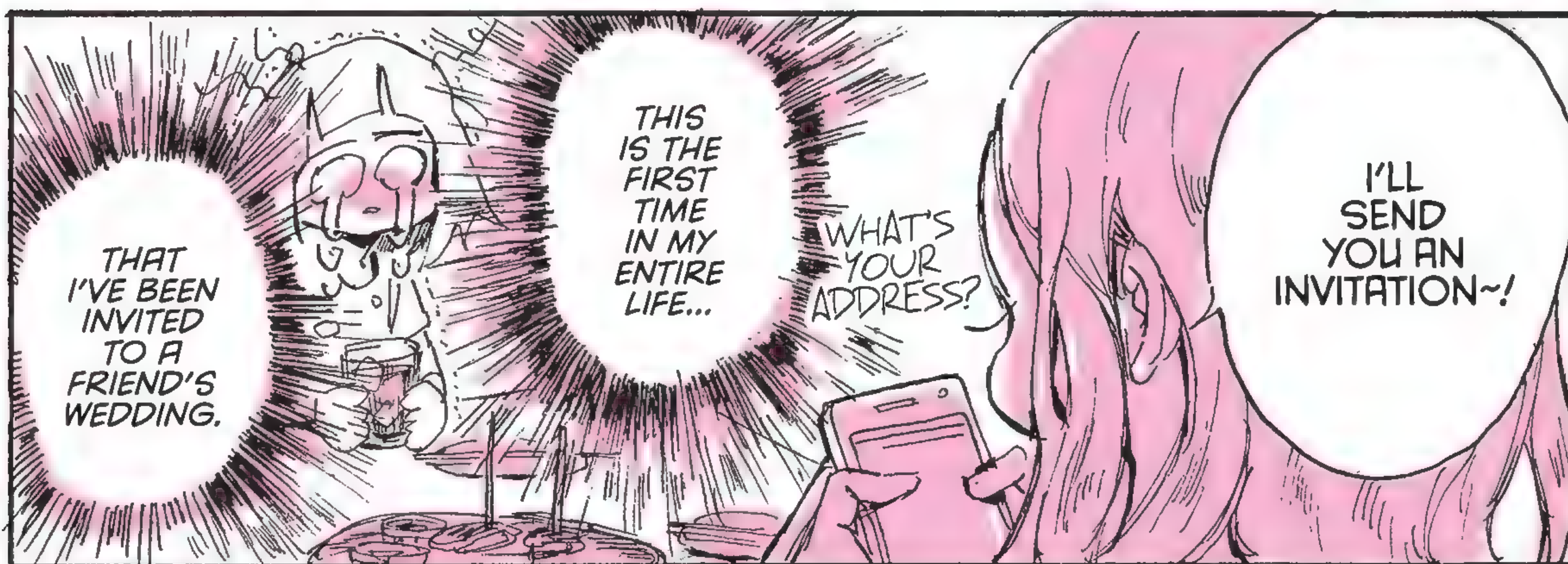
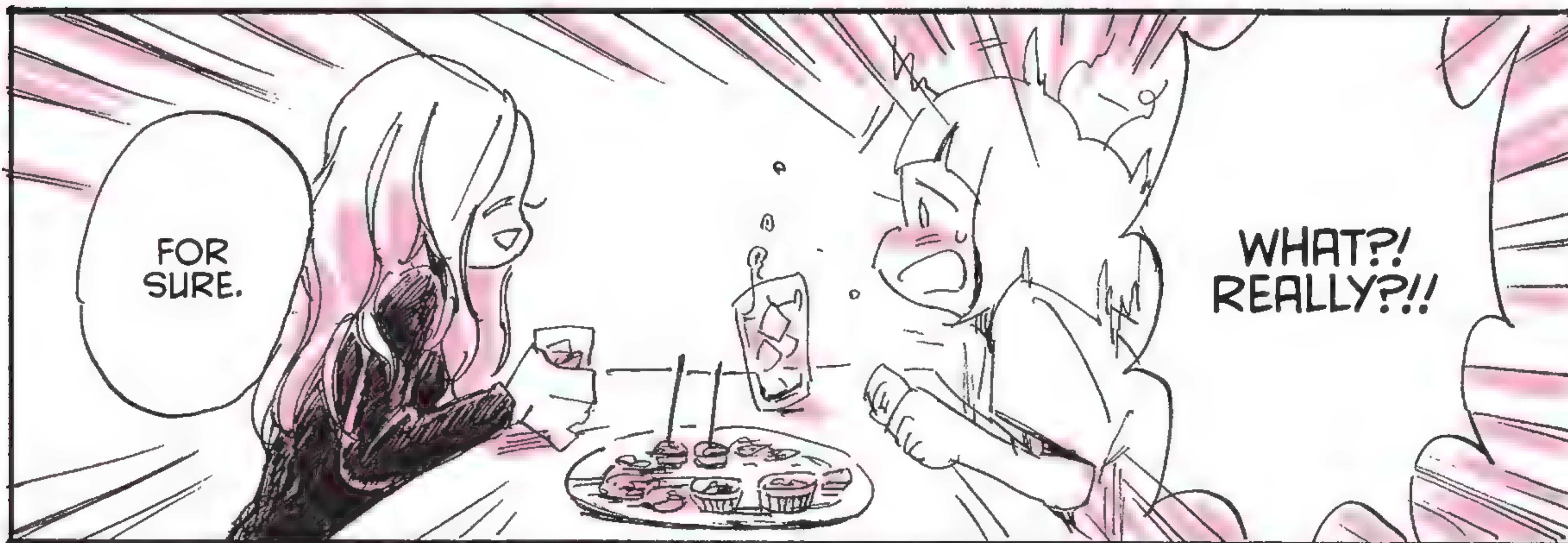
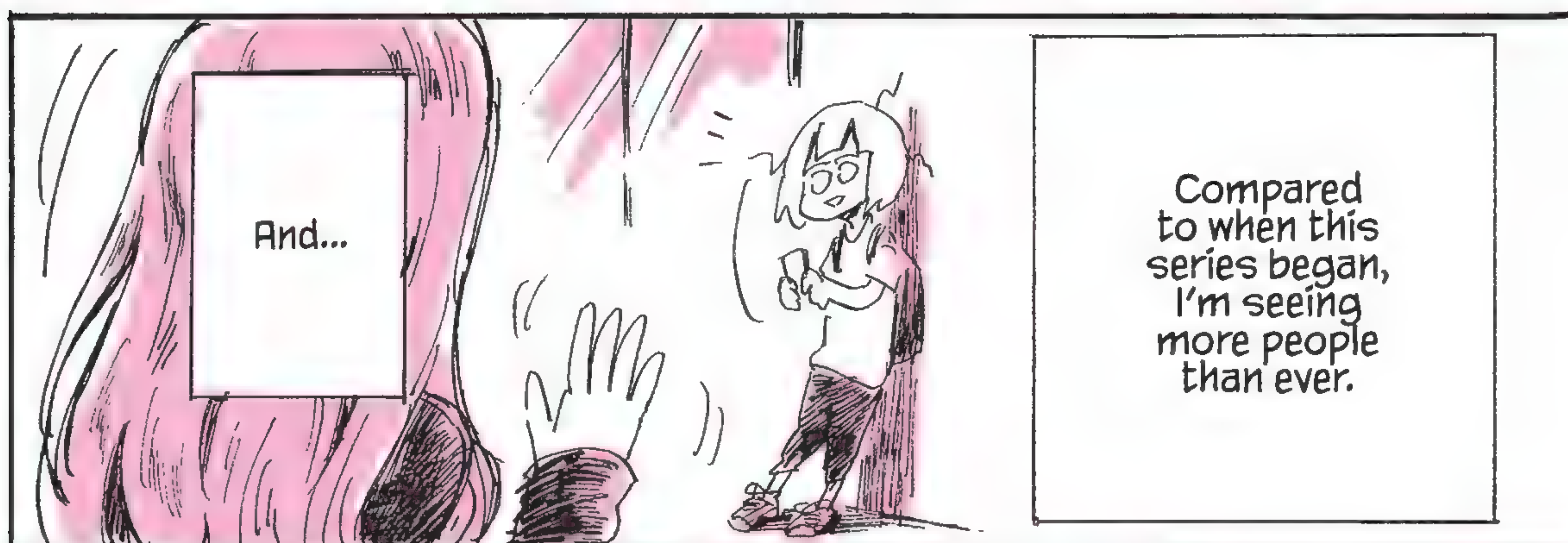


AND
MY OWN
MEASURING
STICK.

I'LL
NURTURE
MY
SELF-
ESTEEM...



And then,
I'll do lots of
(legal) fun stuff
that my parents
and people with
different values
will probably
rail against.

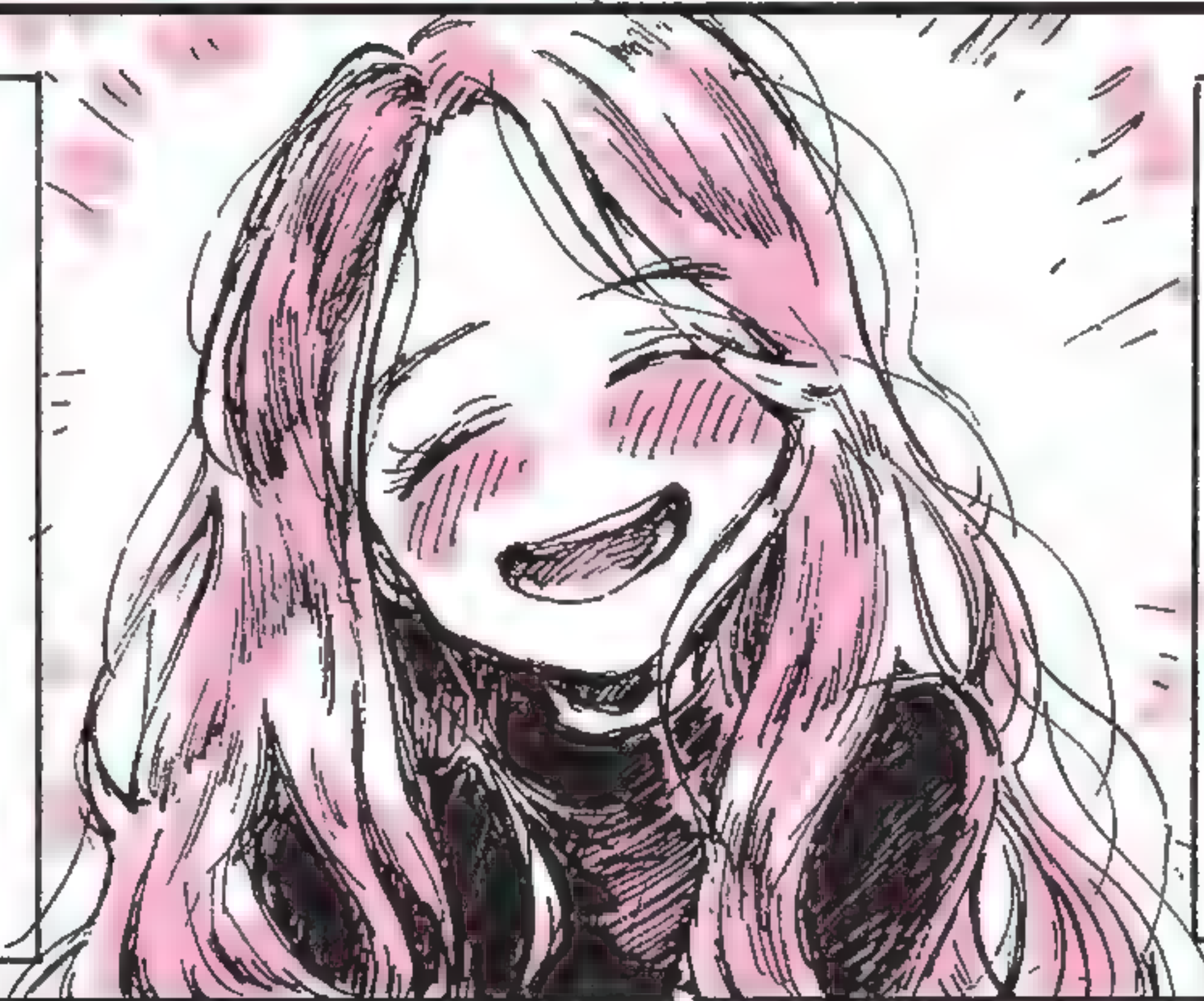


but
inside me,
"marriage"
and
"happiness"
were still
really tied
together.



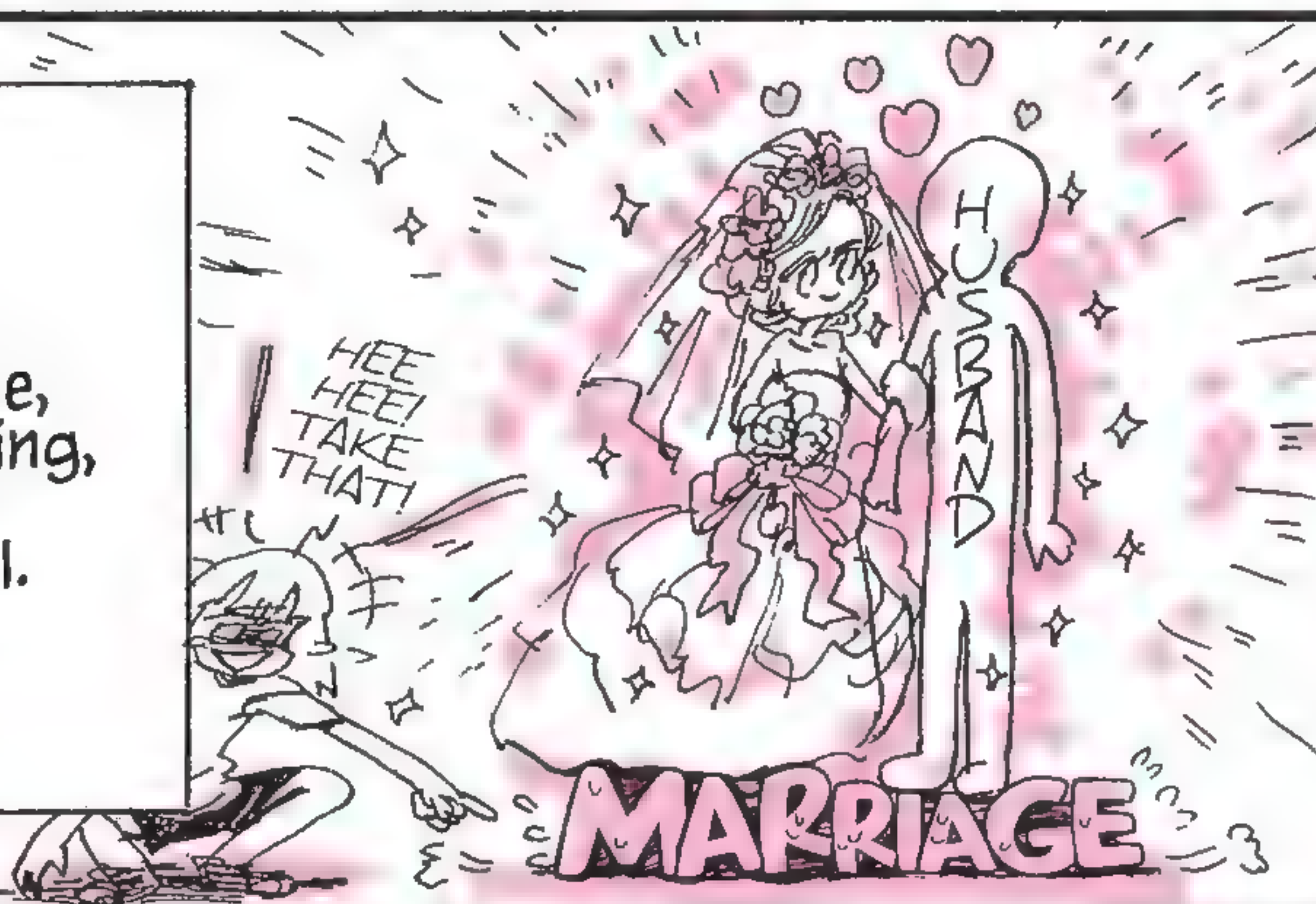
It had
already
been about
a year since
my friend
signed the
marriage
license...

But now
her face and
aura gleamed
even more,
almost like
she was a
different
person.



She'd
always
been
cute and
pretty.

It's
reliable,
refreshing,
and
joyful.



This might
be a weird way
of putting it,
but you use
marriage to
trick yourself
into being
happy.
(I think?)

AH! IT'S
BLINDING!

GLEAM

"Loving
and being
loved" is an
incredible
thing,
huh...?"

And now,
for the first
time in my
life, I'd been
invited to
a friend's
wedding.

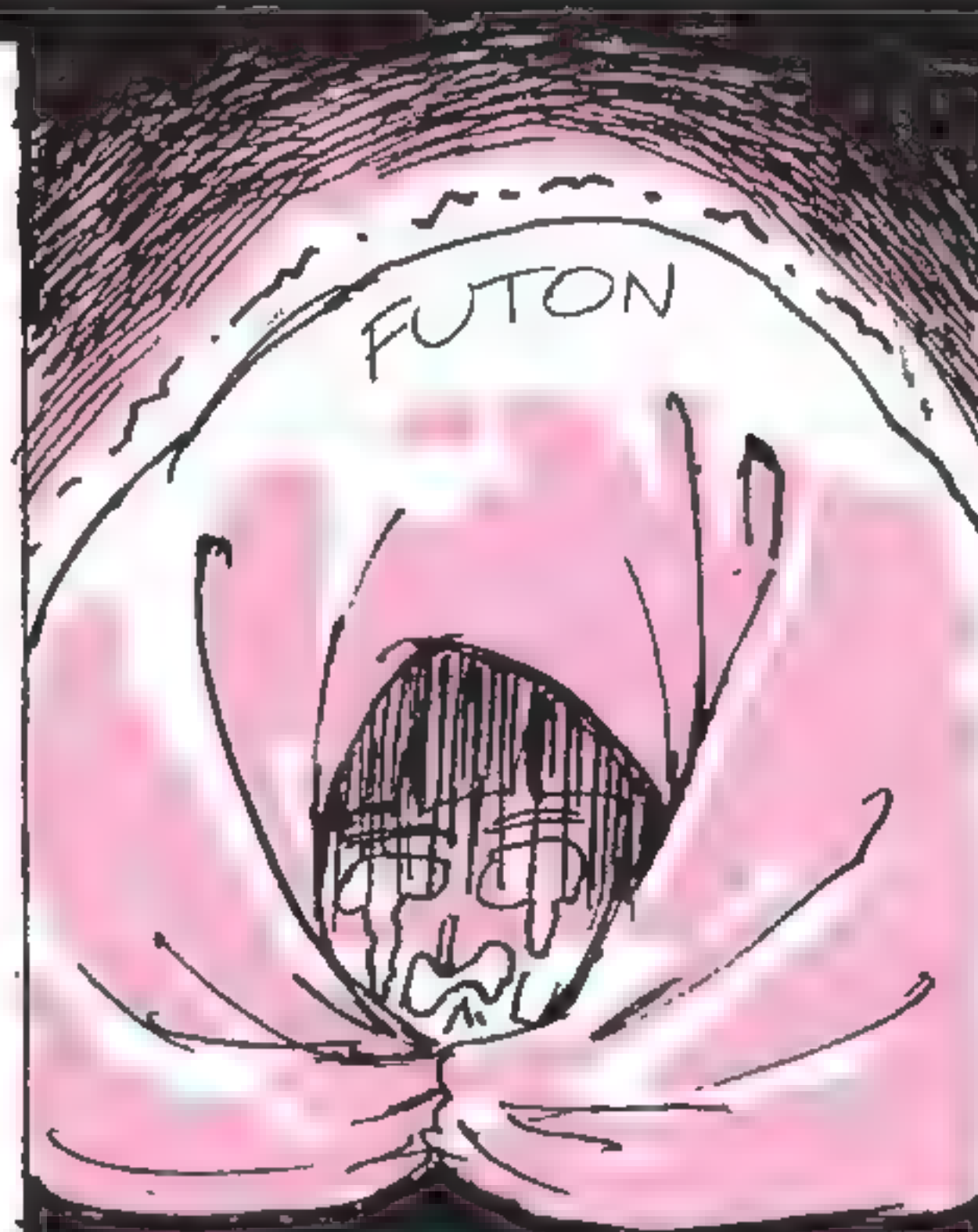


I'd
seen this
friend a
bunch
of times
already
this year.



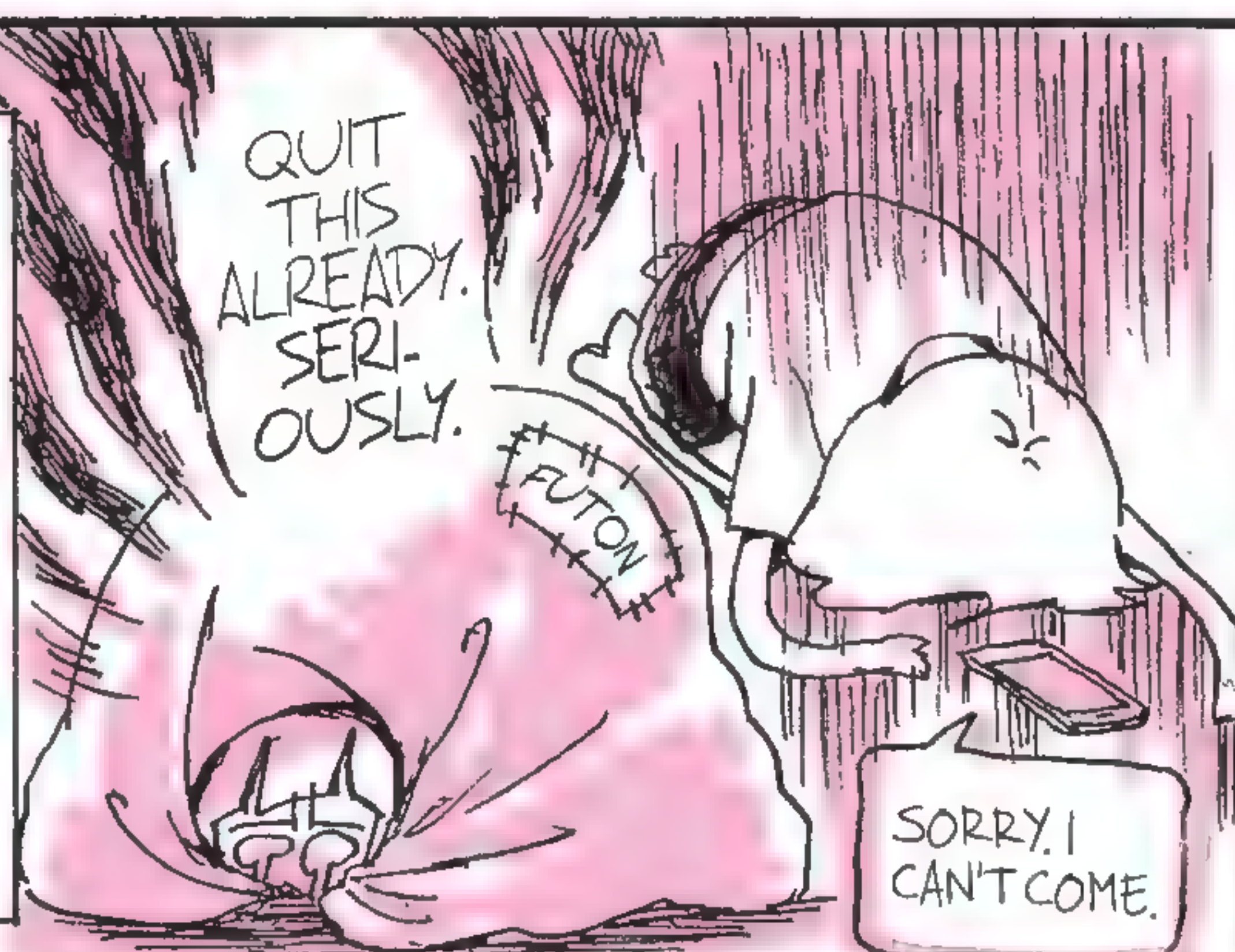
A "friend's
wedding"
was something
that apparently
existed in the world,
despite my
never having
encountered it.

Even if they
had invited me,
I know I would've
disappointed
them and made
them hate me.
I was scared and
embarrassed and
pathetic, and
I would've turned
them down.

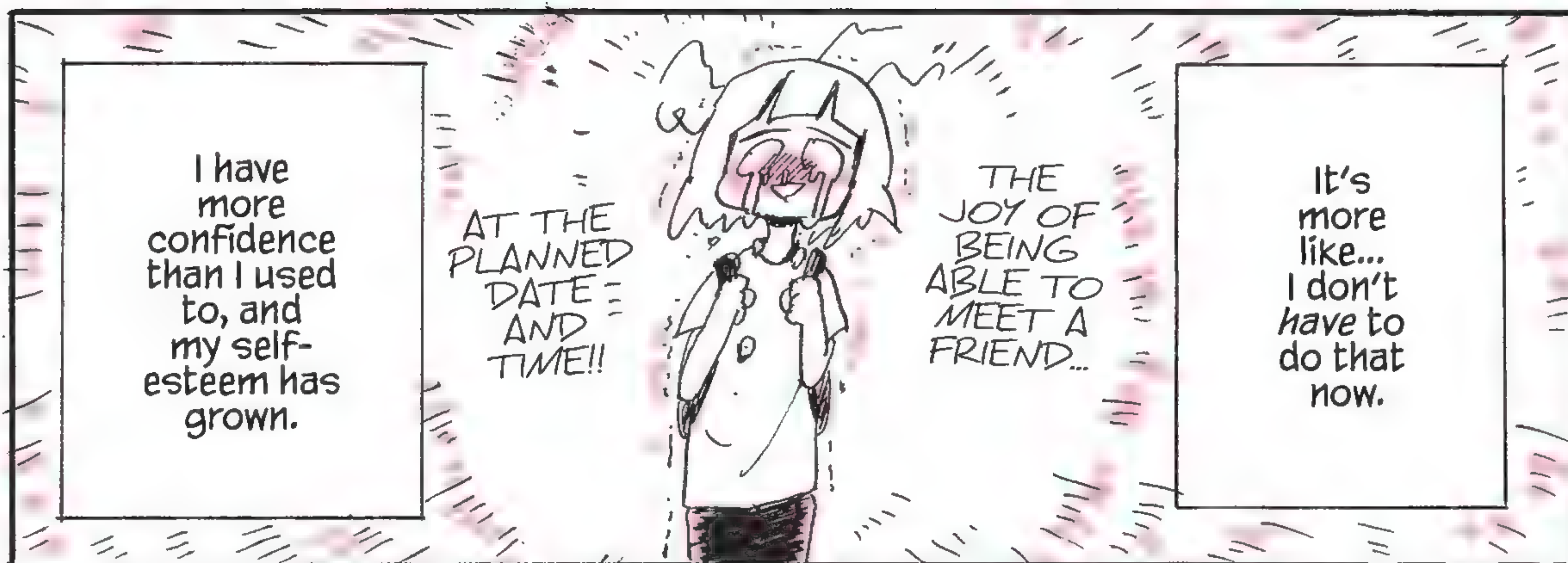


And I've
had friends
before. Was
it just that
they couldn't
actually talk
to me?

I
basically
never
do that
now.



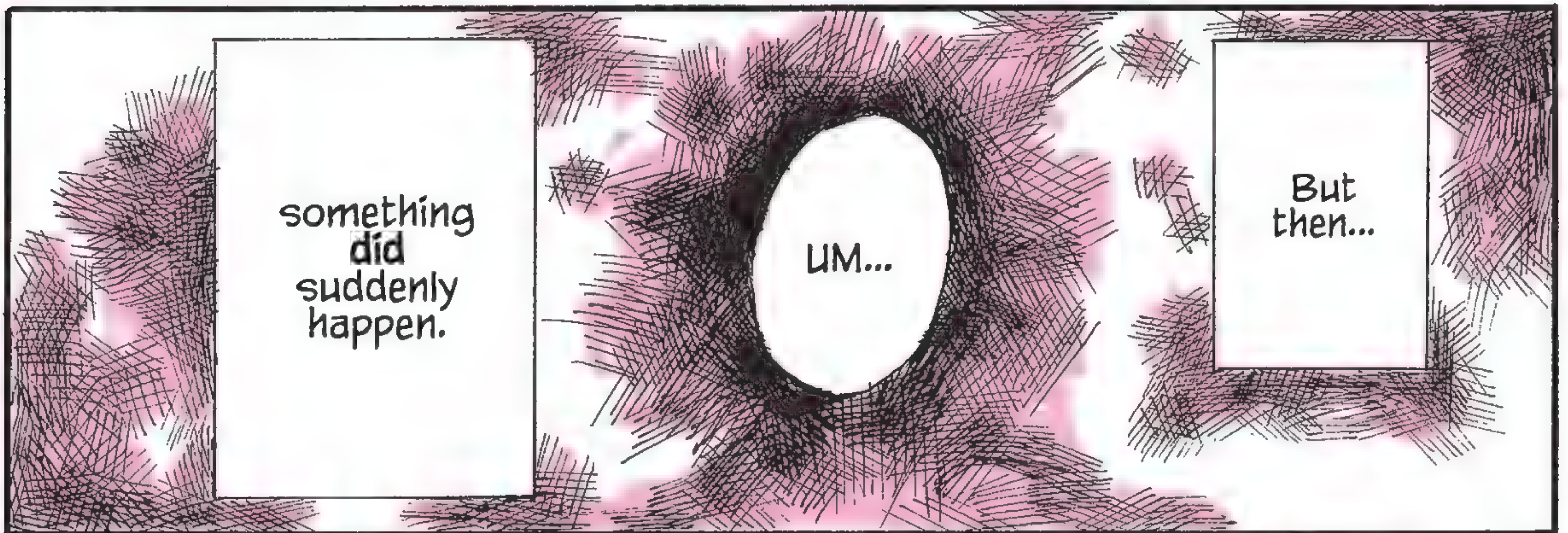
Ah,
right.
I always
used to
cancel at
the last
minute.
(I'm
sorry...)





I STILL
HAVEN'T
BEEN
HUGGED
A SINGLE
TIME!!!!

Meanwhile,
although I'd
gotten nothing
but happy comments
like, "I want to give
you a hug" ever since
the book came out...



something
did
suddenly
happen.

UM...

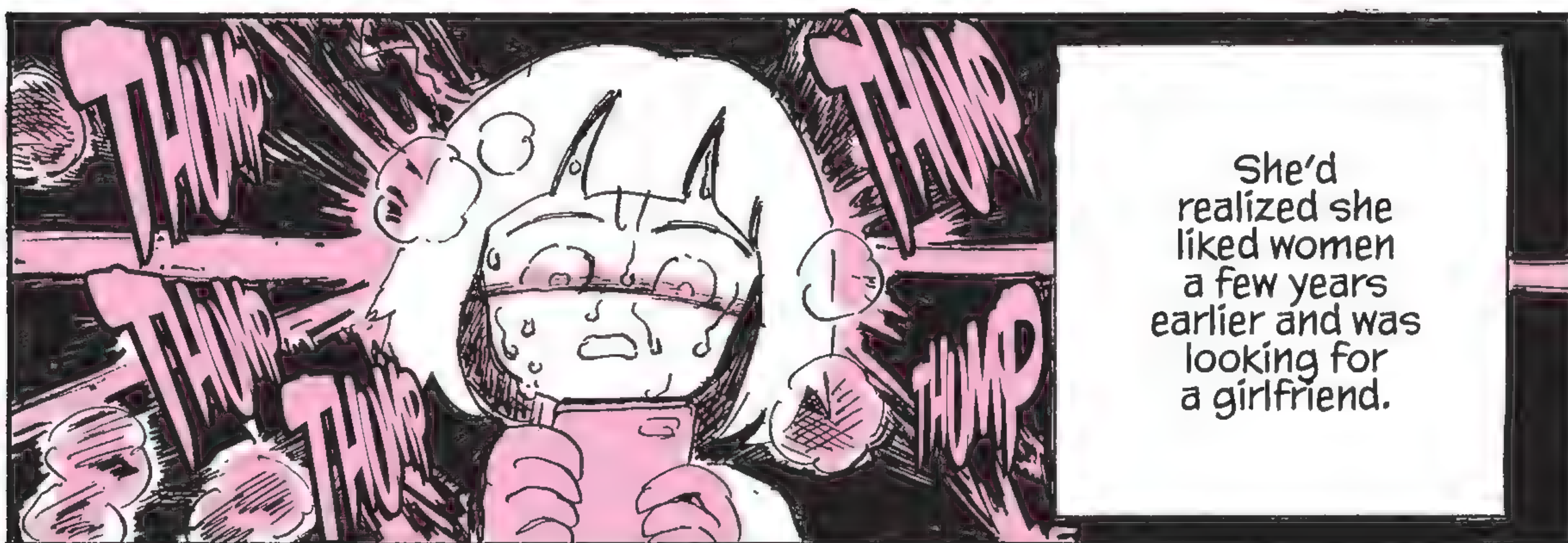
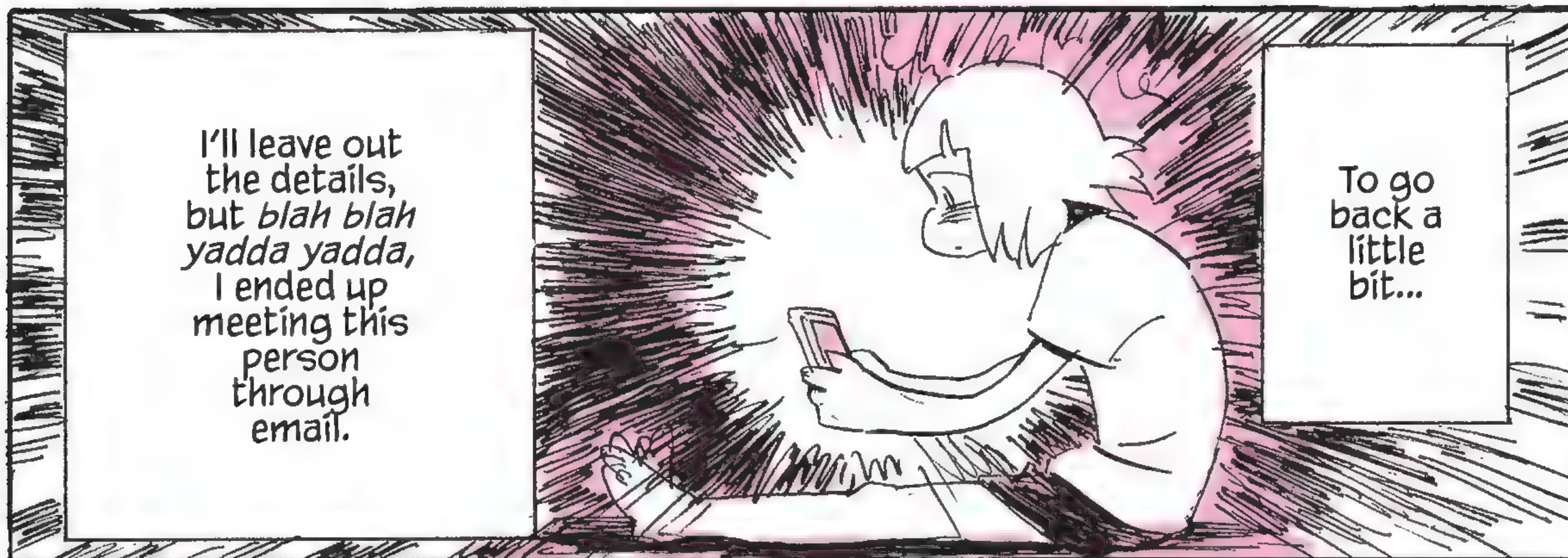
But
then...

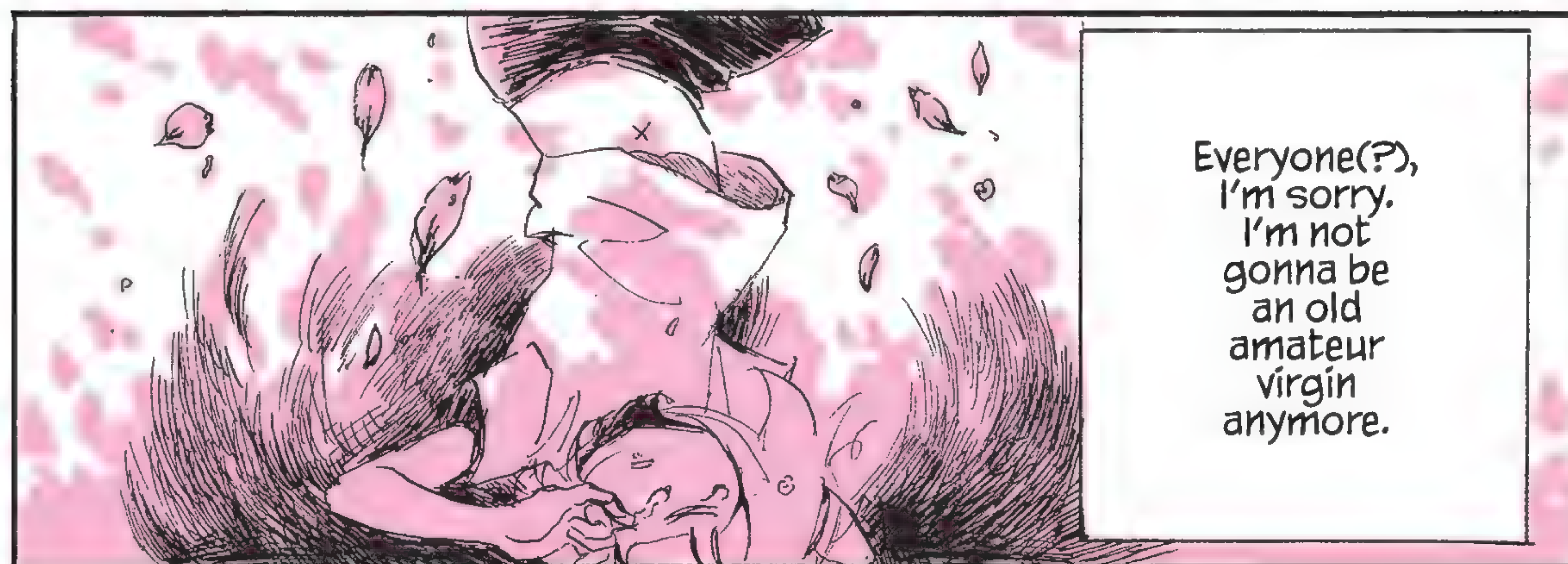
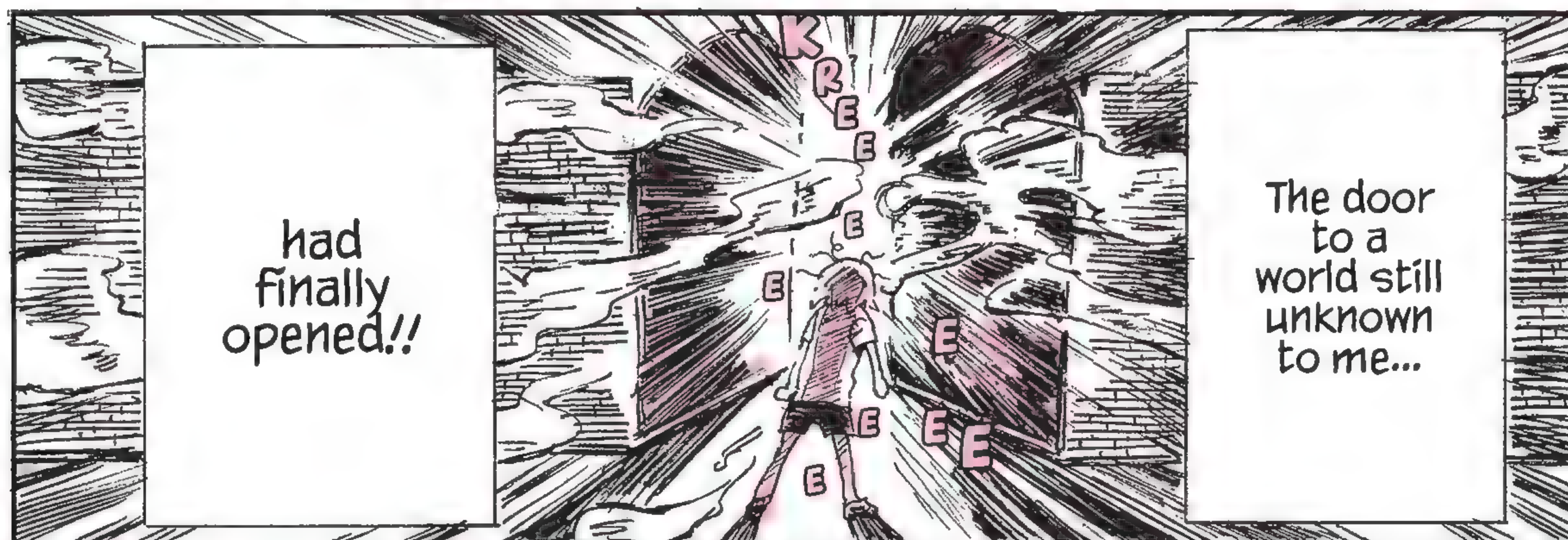
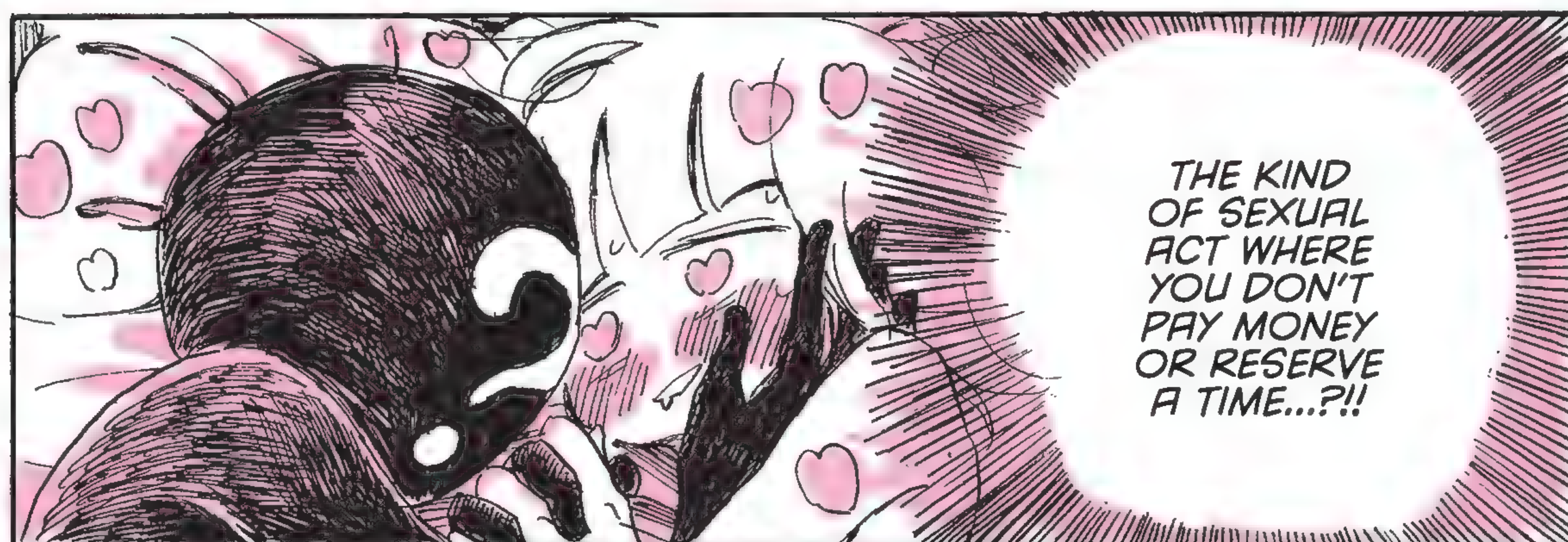


AND
IF THAT
GOES
WELL,
MAYBE
START
DATING?

CAN
WE BE
FRIENDS...

After
twenty-nine
years of
history,
something
finally
shifted.





HER

00:00

THAT'S TOTALLY FINE. ///

01:00

I had
nothing
but
ulterior
motives.

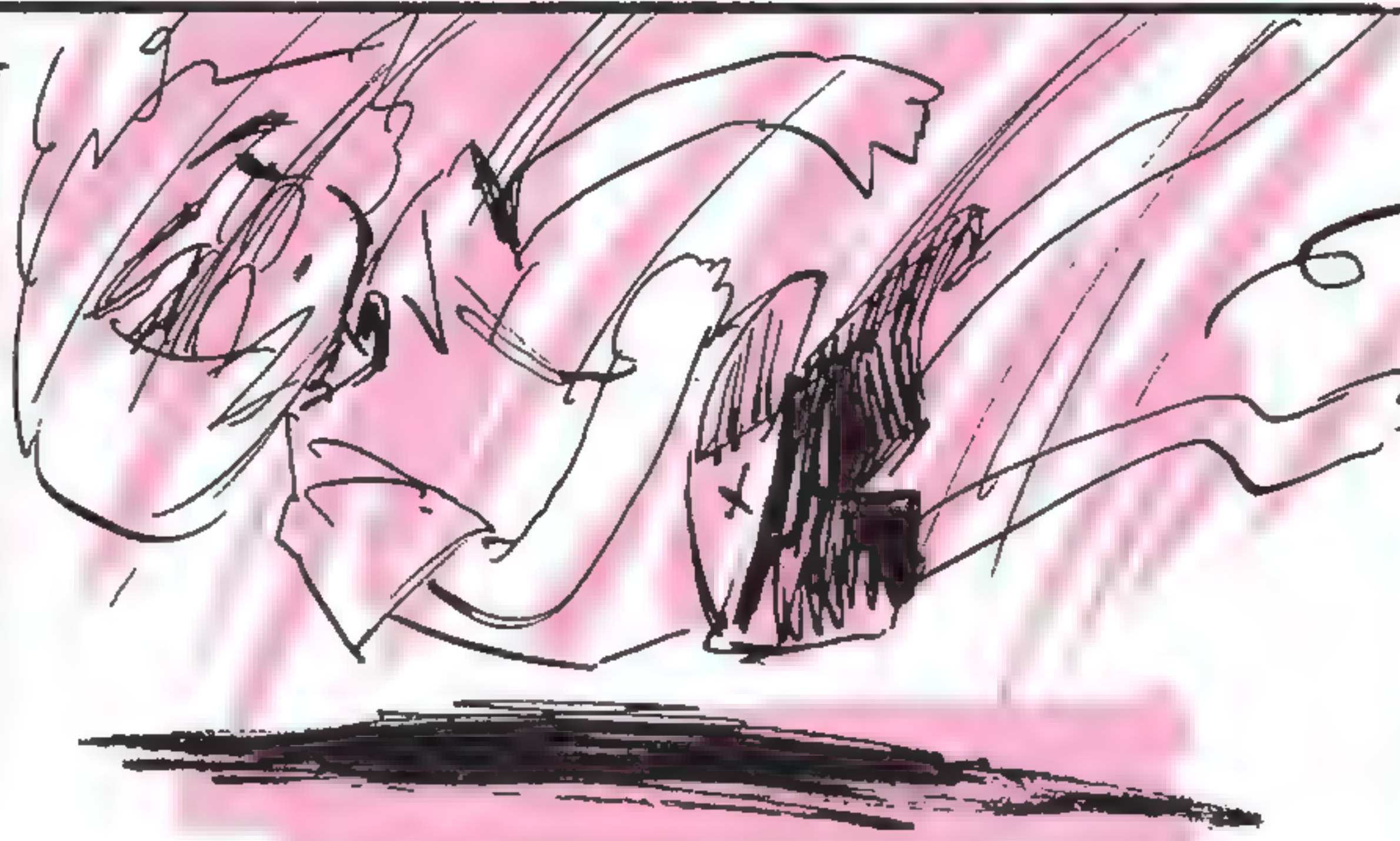
I'D ACTUALLY LOVE TO MEET YOU
RIGHT NOW, BUT I'M ON MY PERIOD.
THE END OF THIS WEEK SHOULD
BE GOOD, THOUGH...!

HER

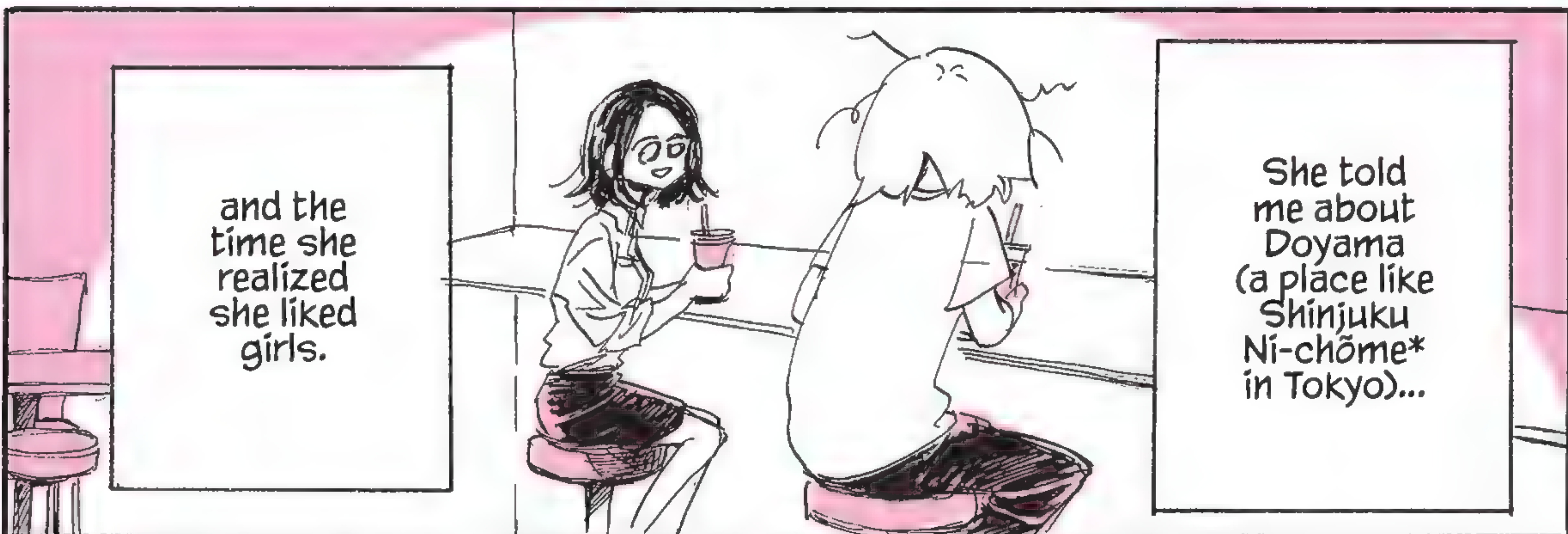
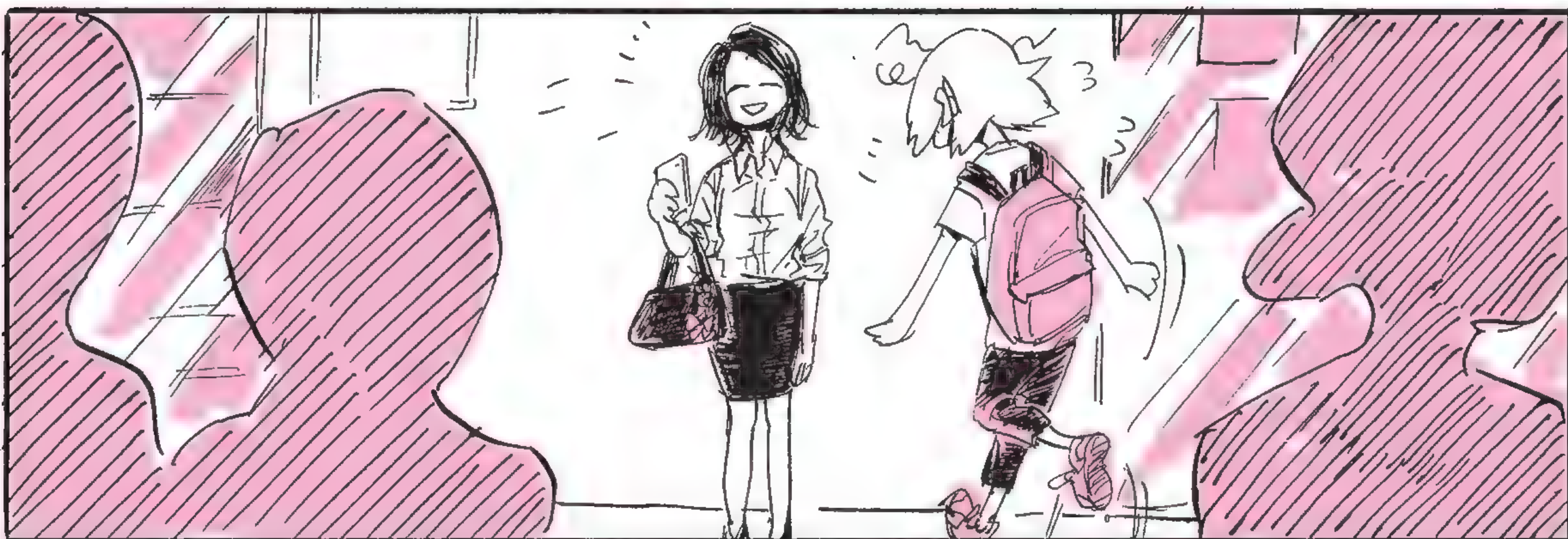
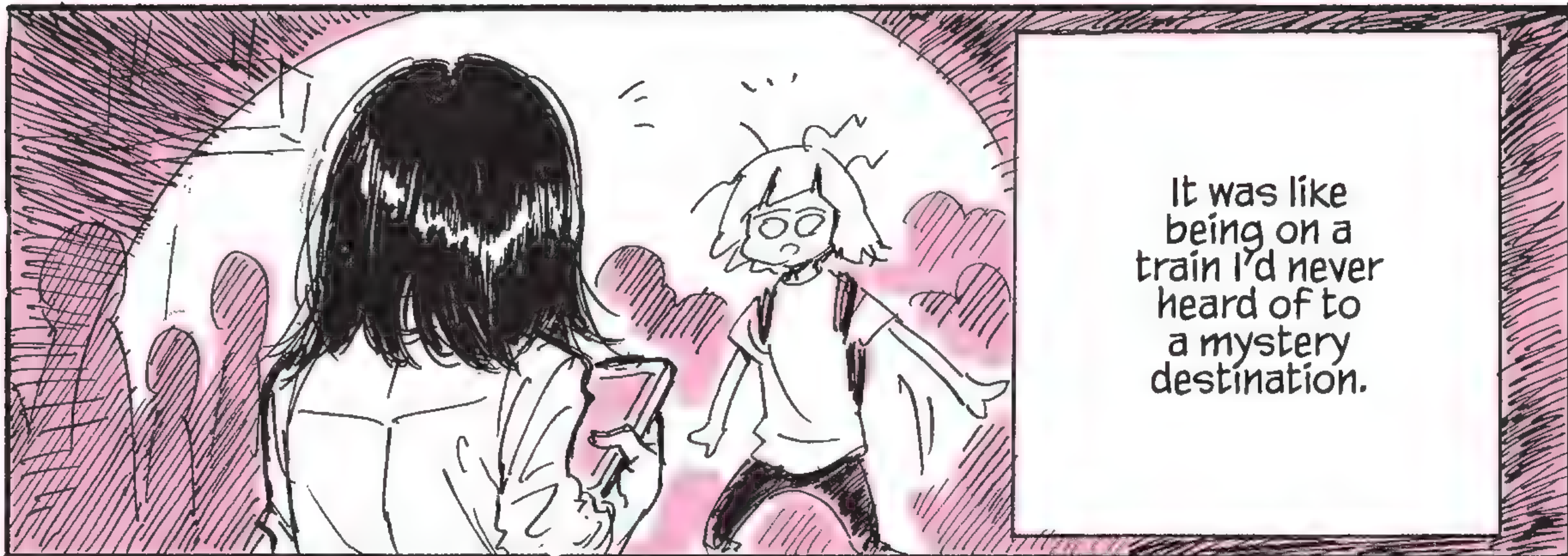
I COULD MEET UP WITH YOU
TOMORROW AFTER WORK, IF
YOU WANT TO TALK A LITTLE.

02:00

This
was all
so new
to me.

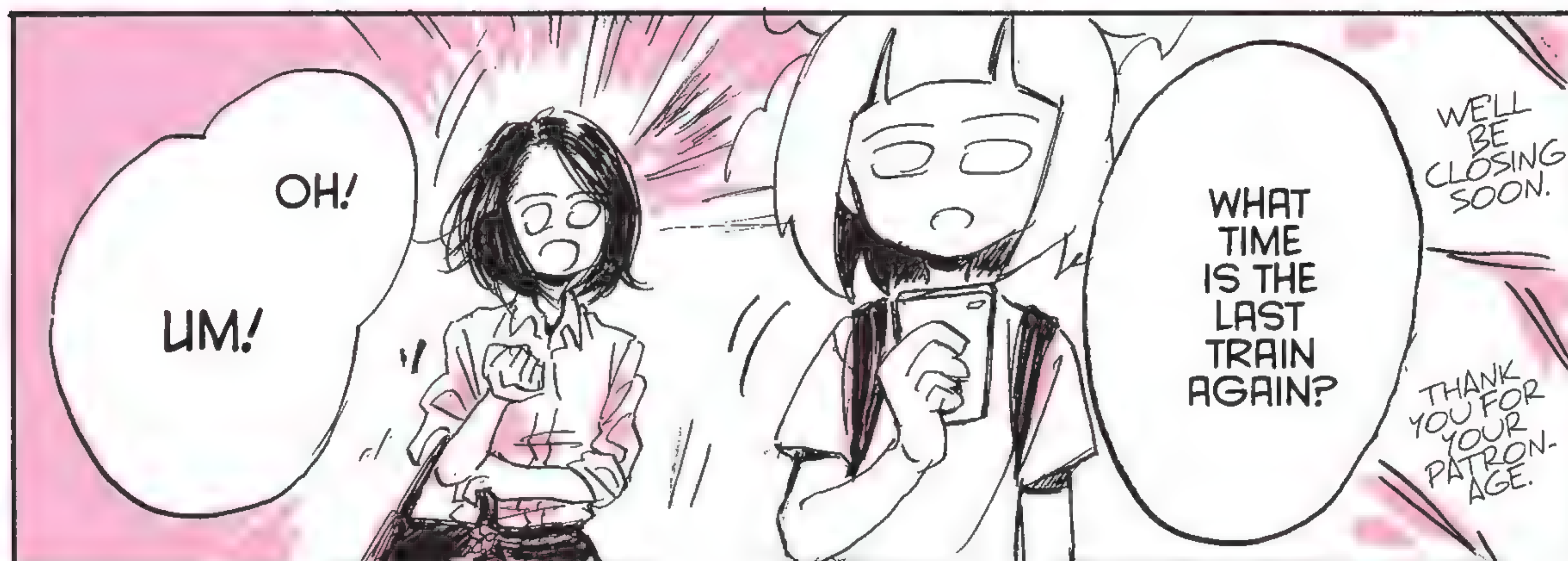
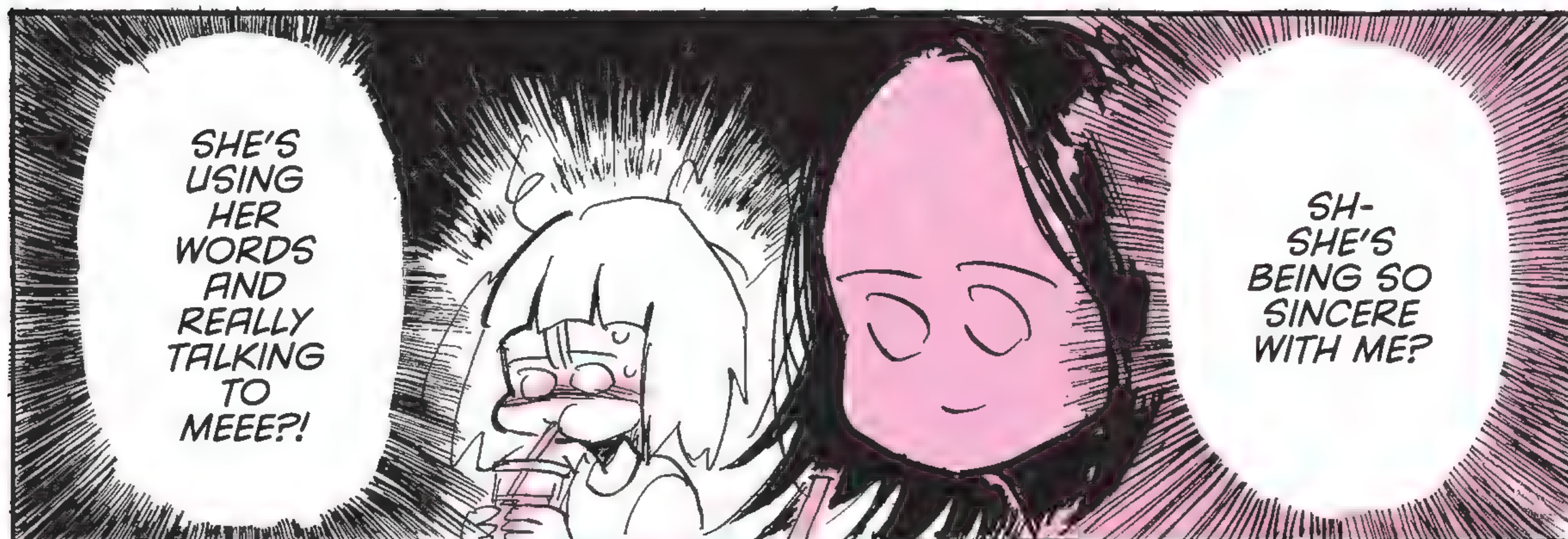
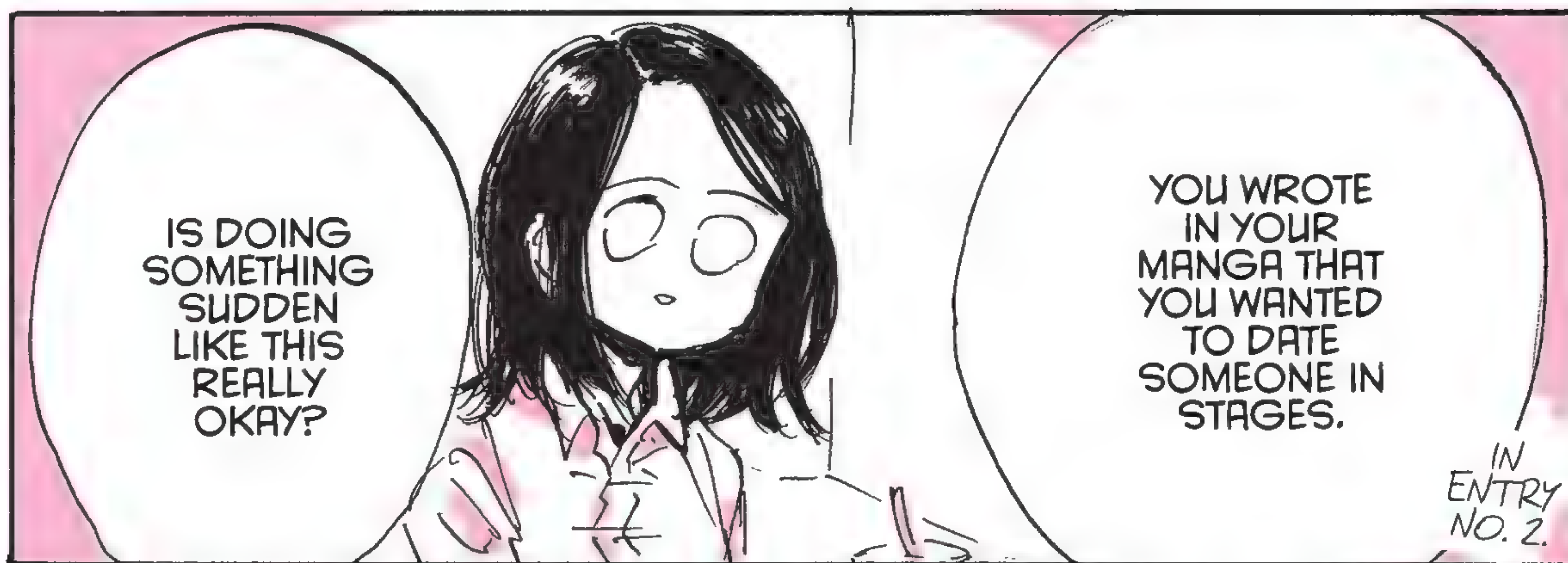


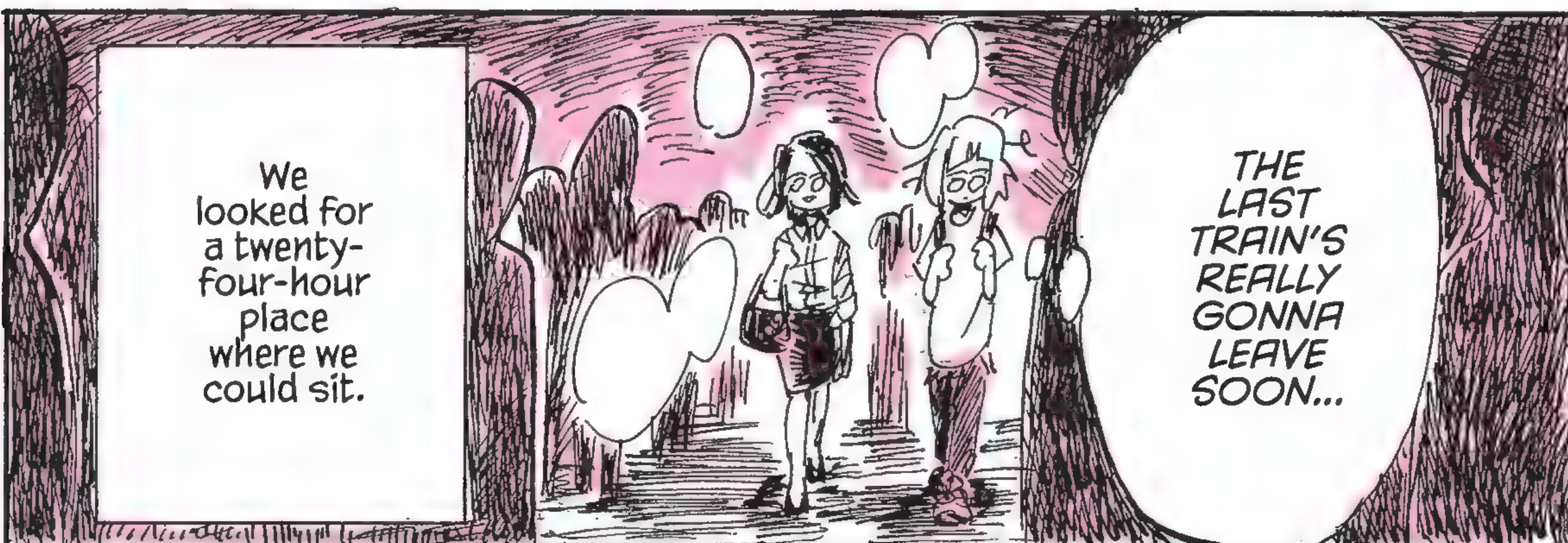
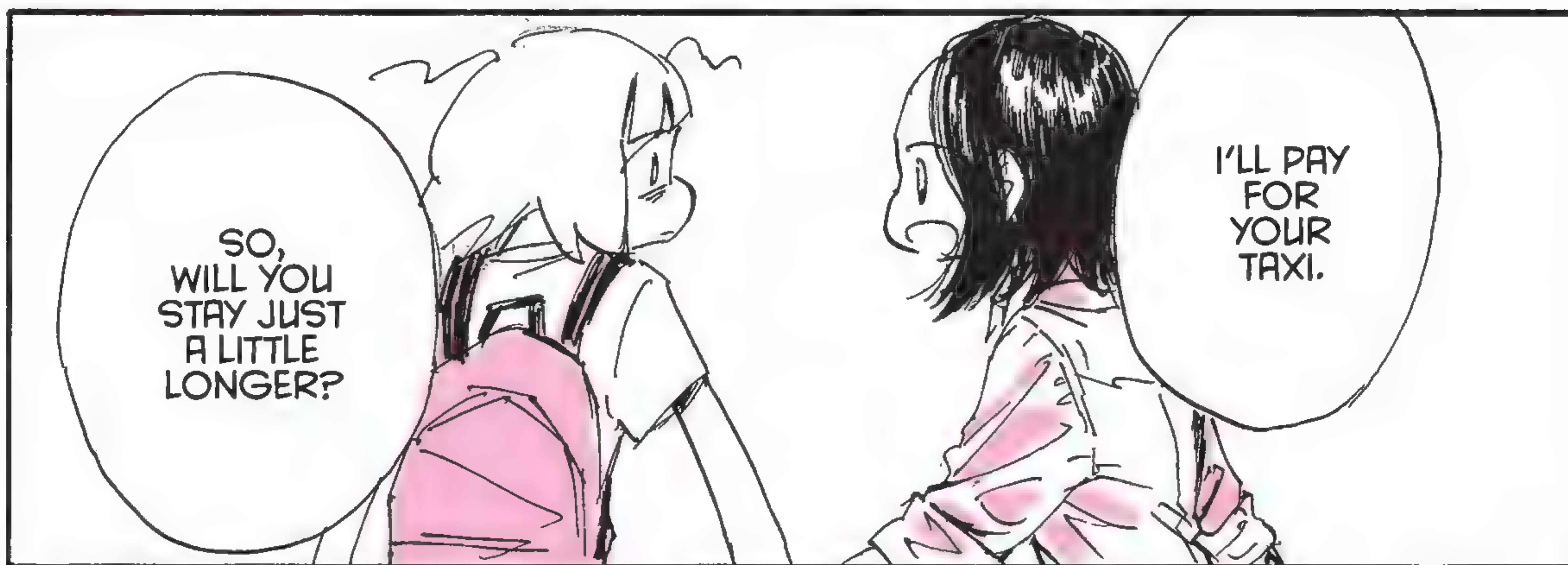
I WANT TO
MEET YOU.

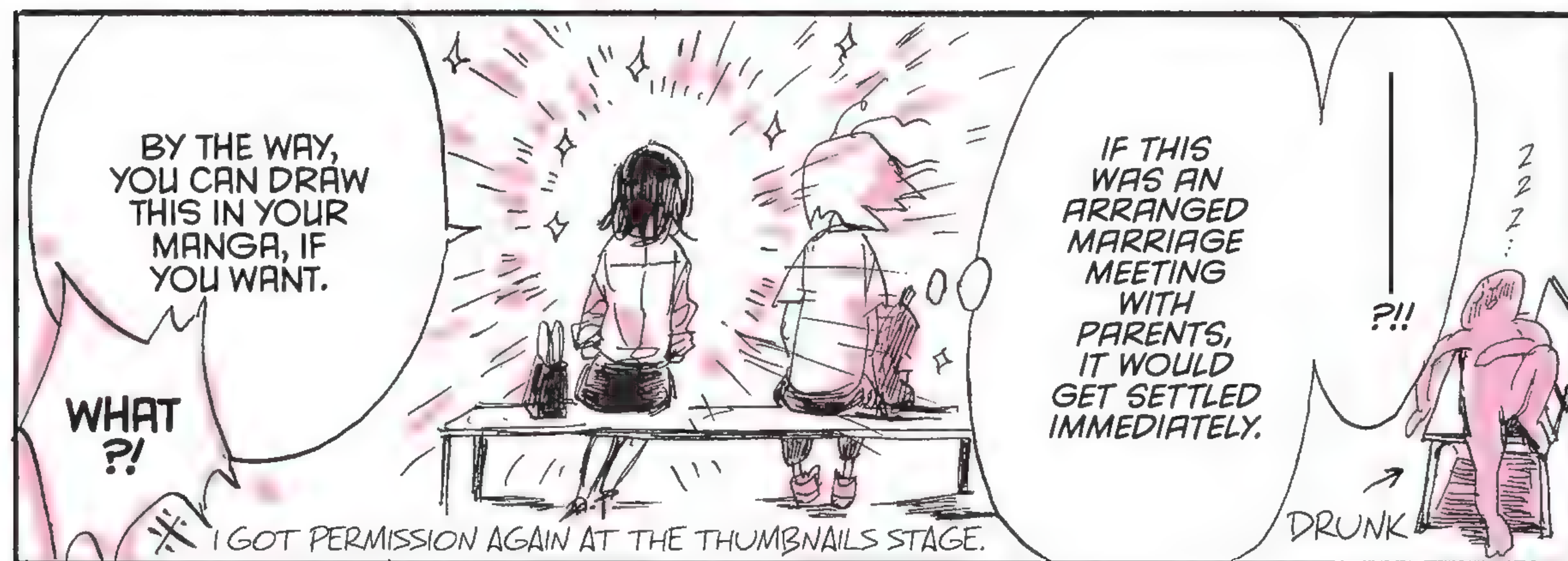
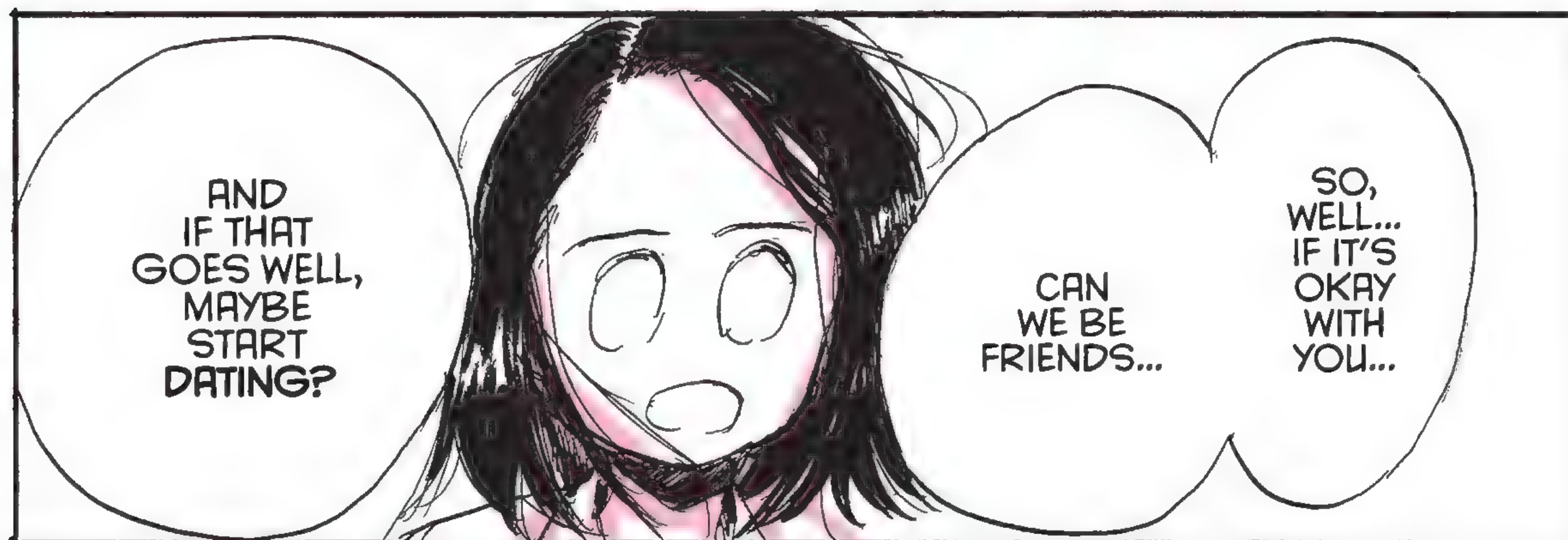
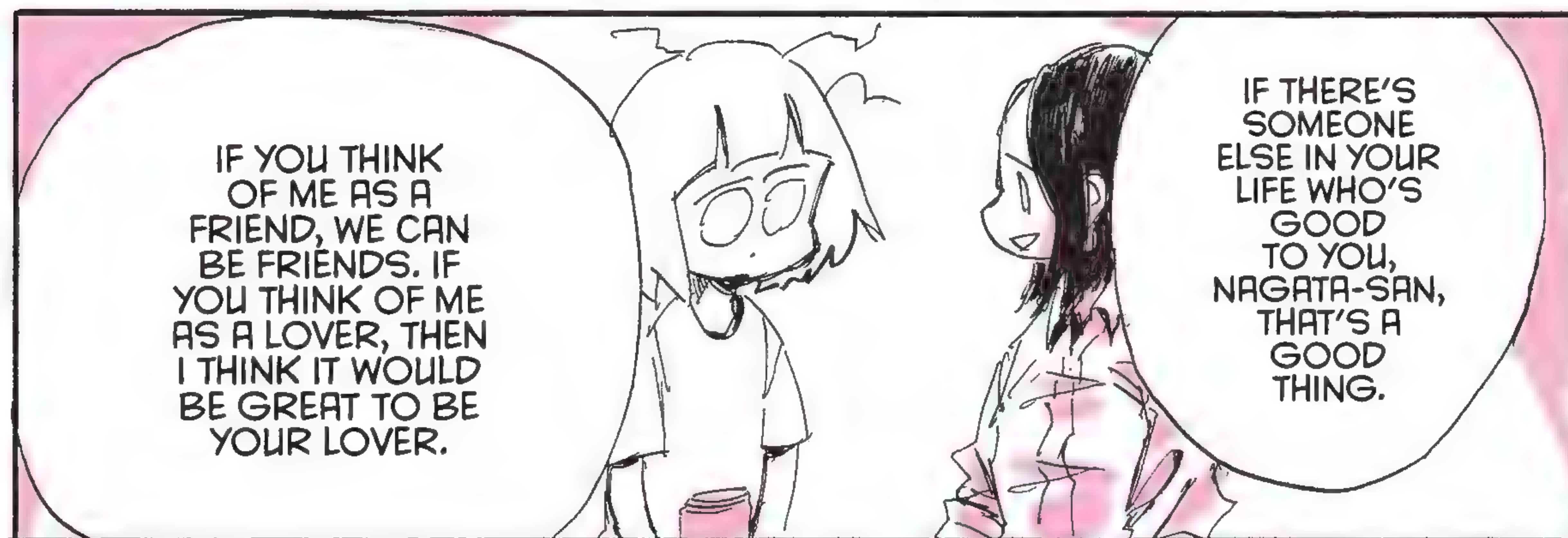
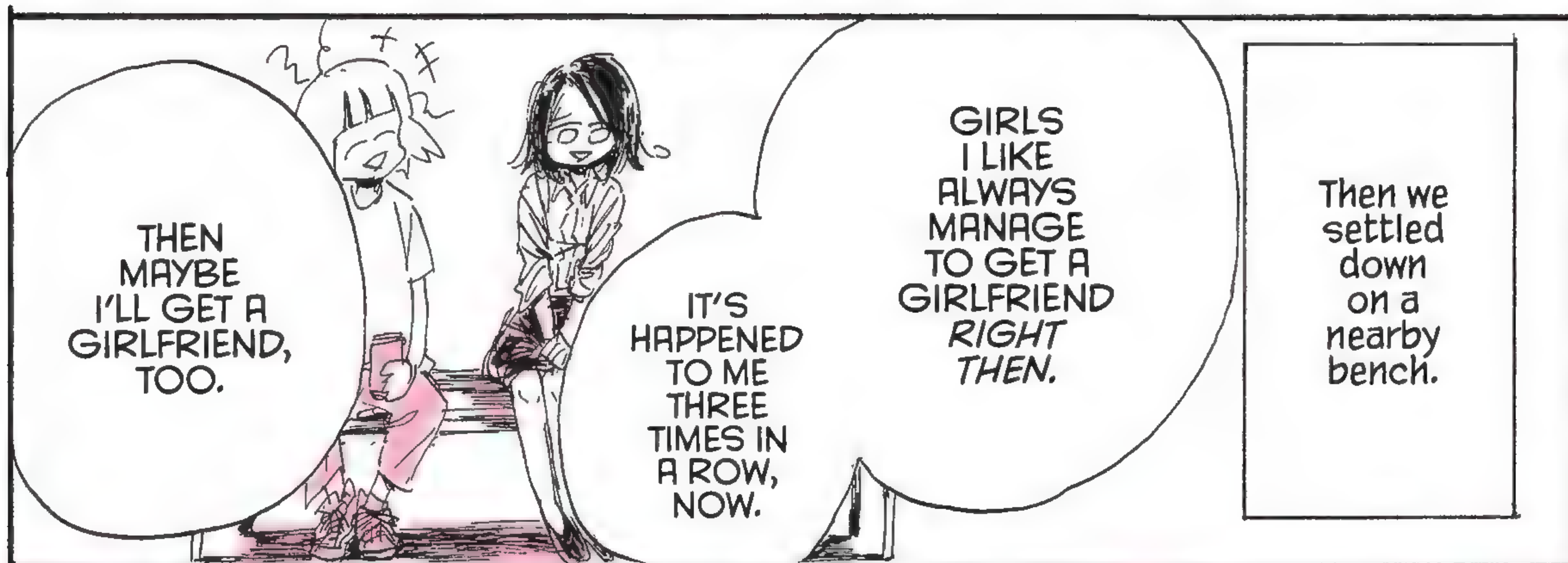


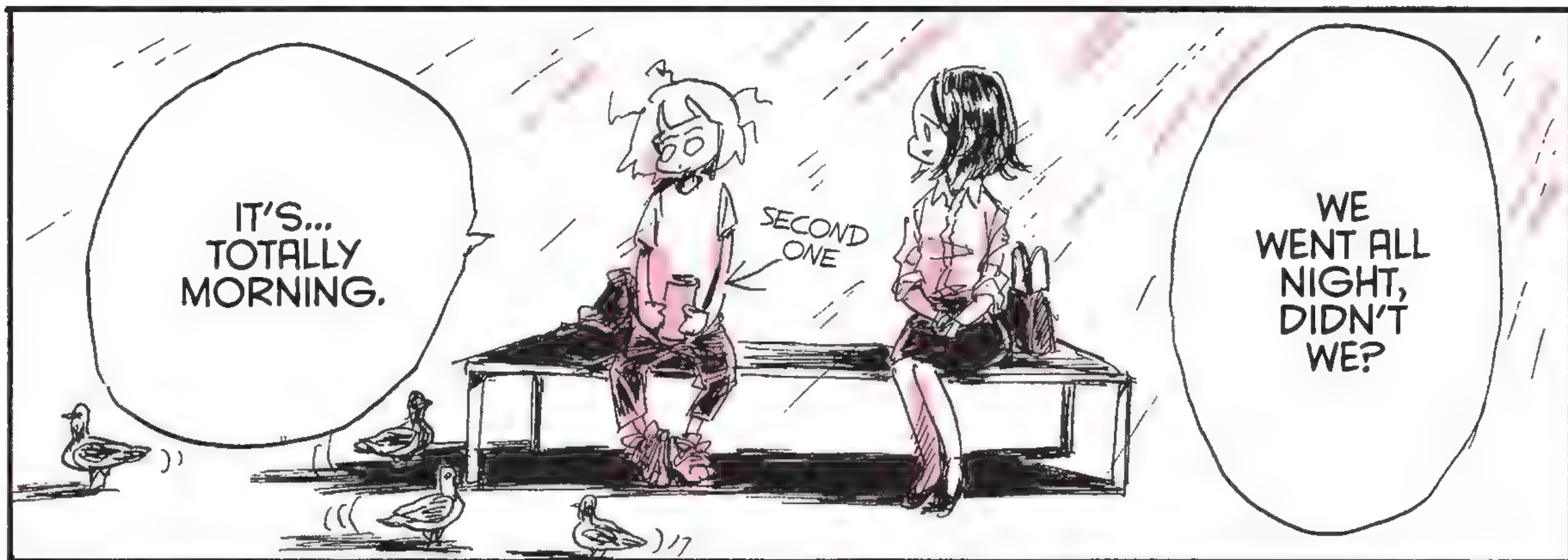
*A famous gay neighborhood in Tokyo, where a variety of gay bars, shops, and services can be found.

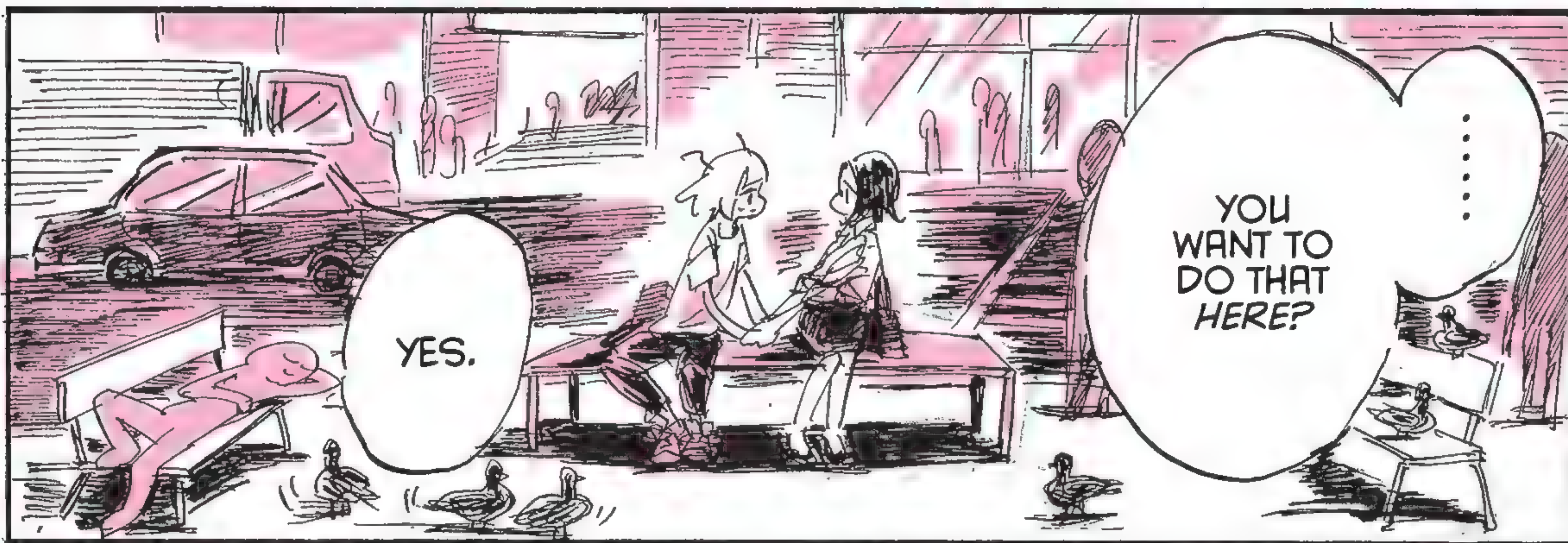
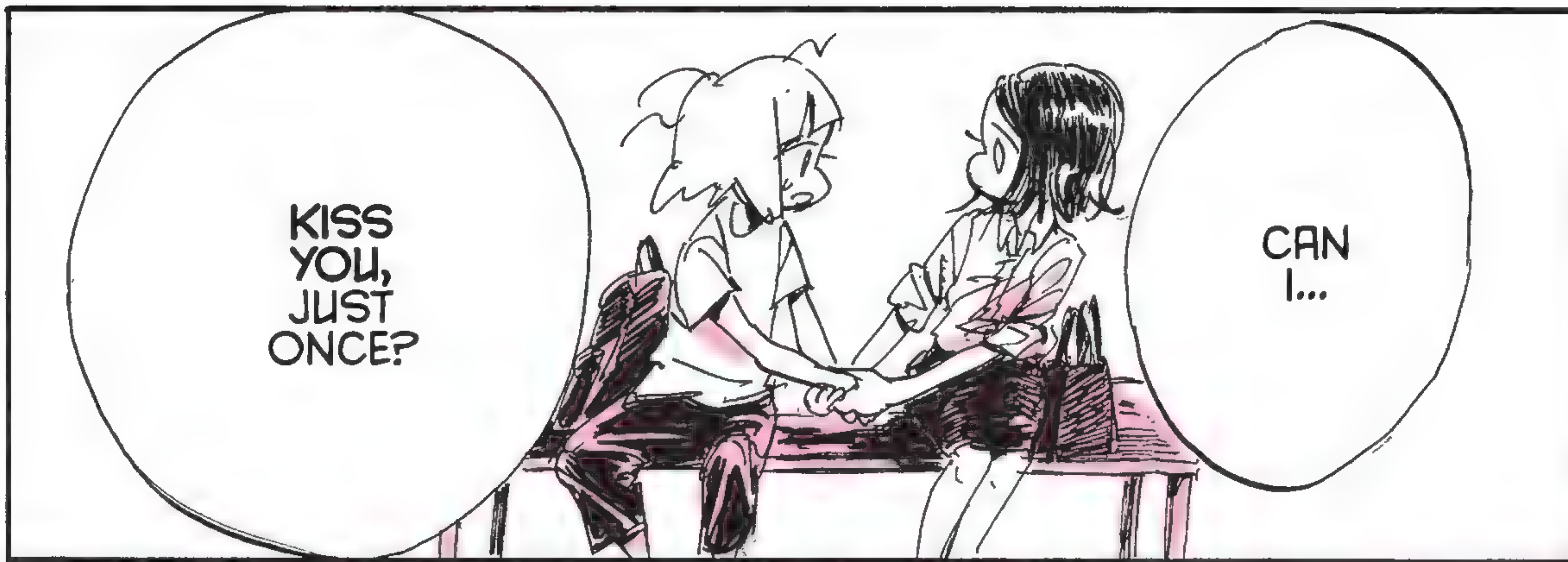


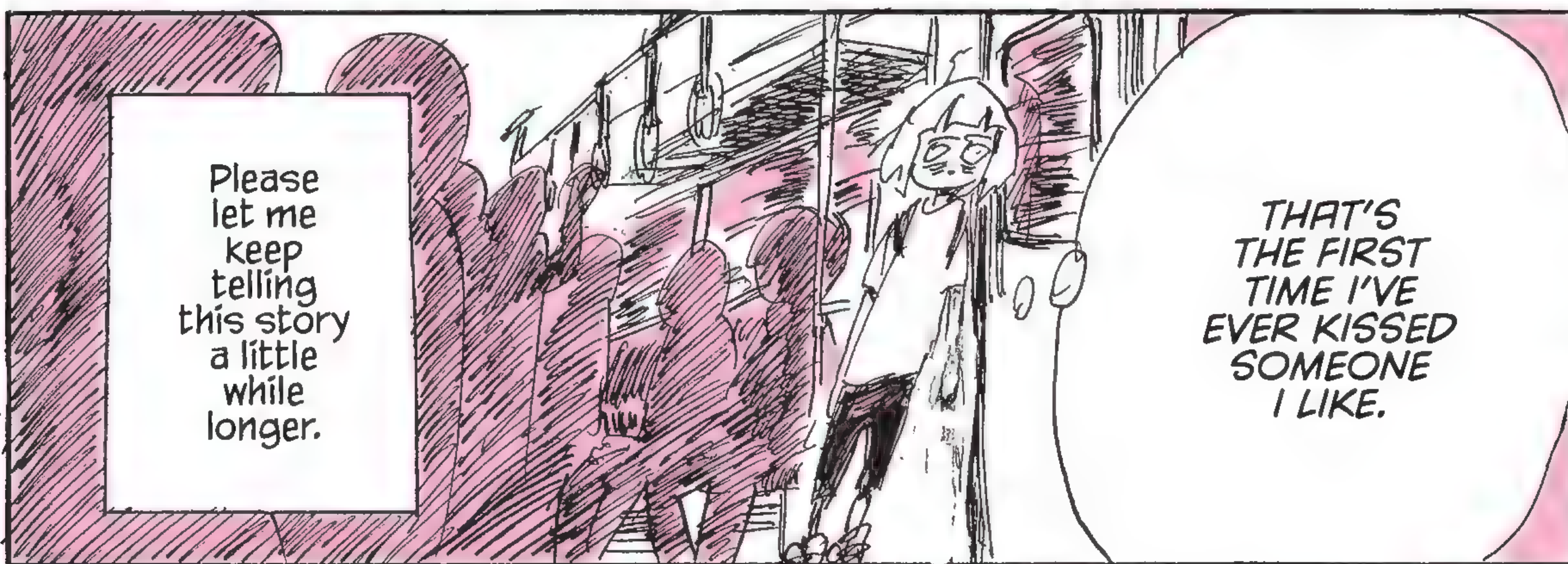
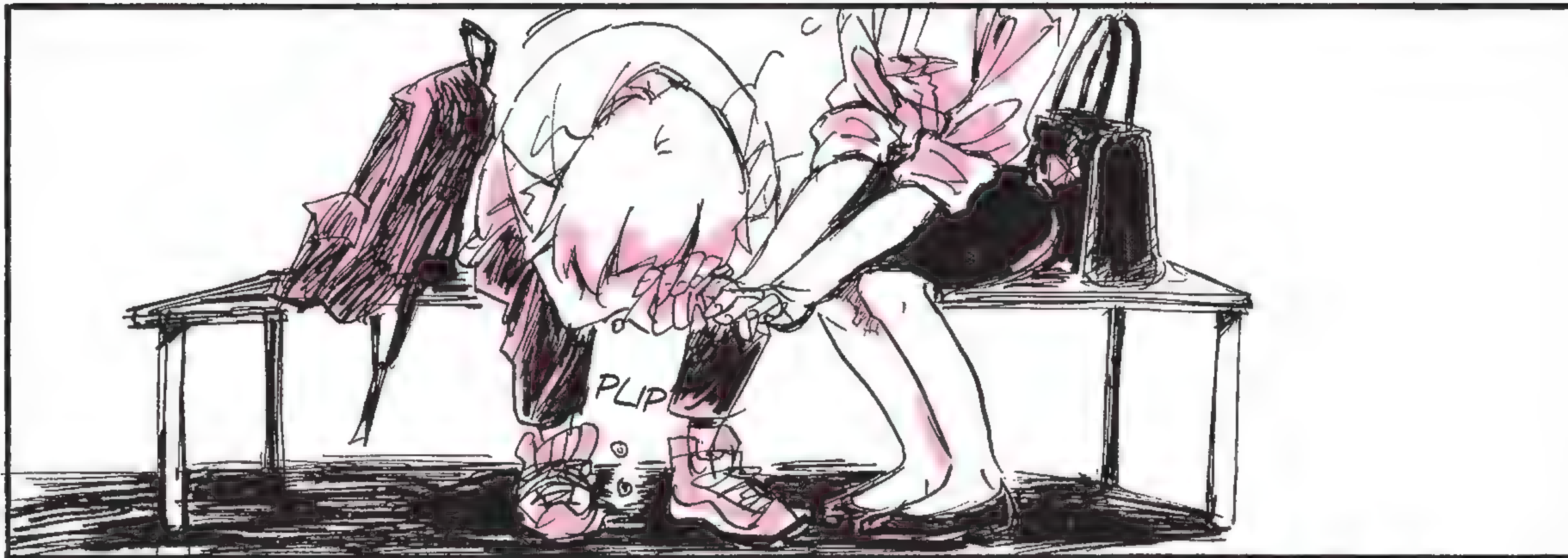


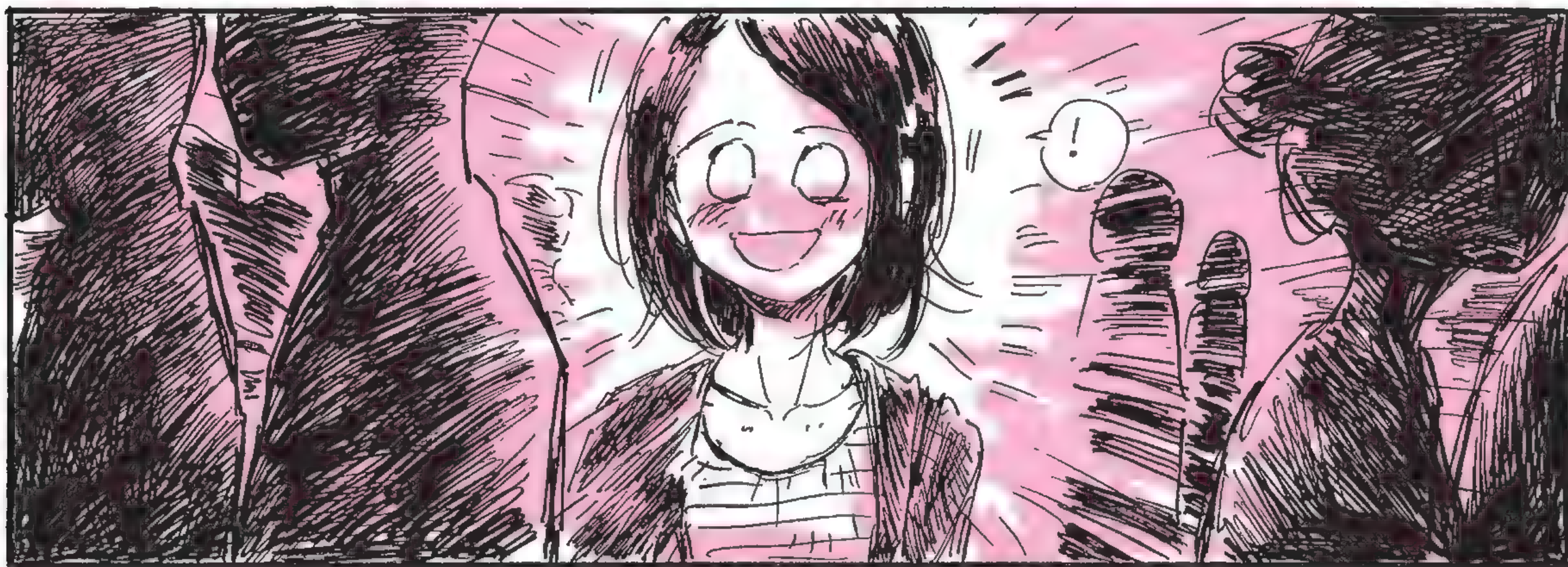
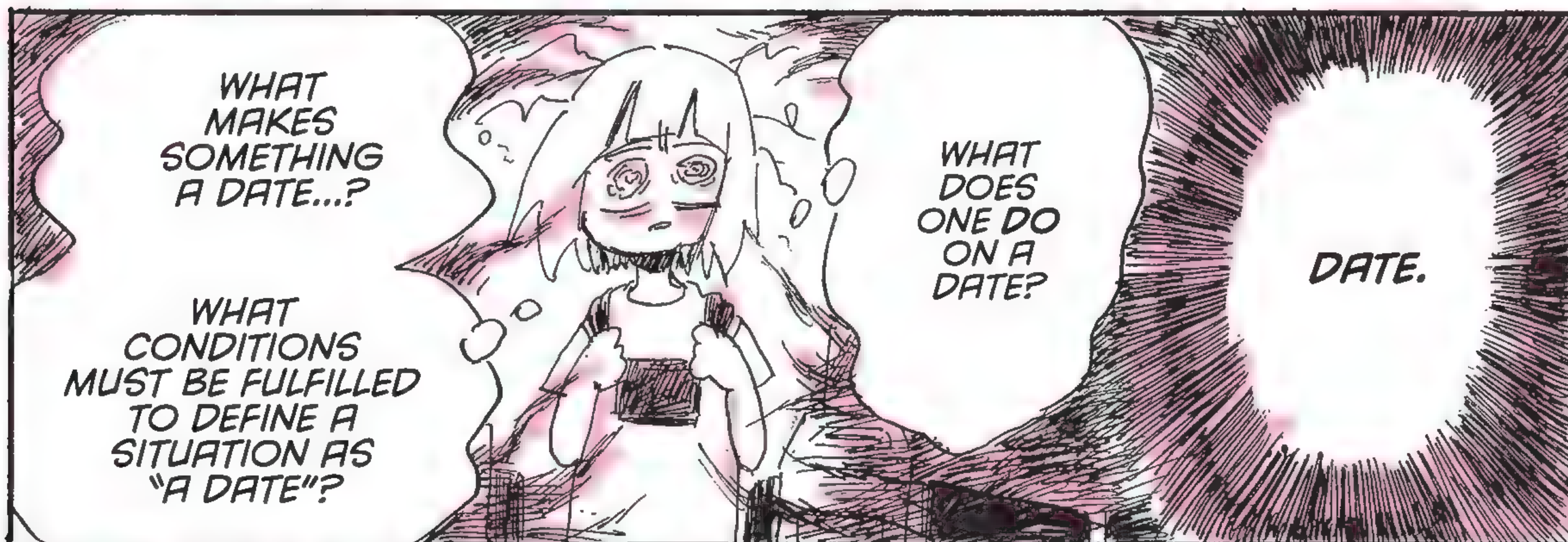
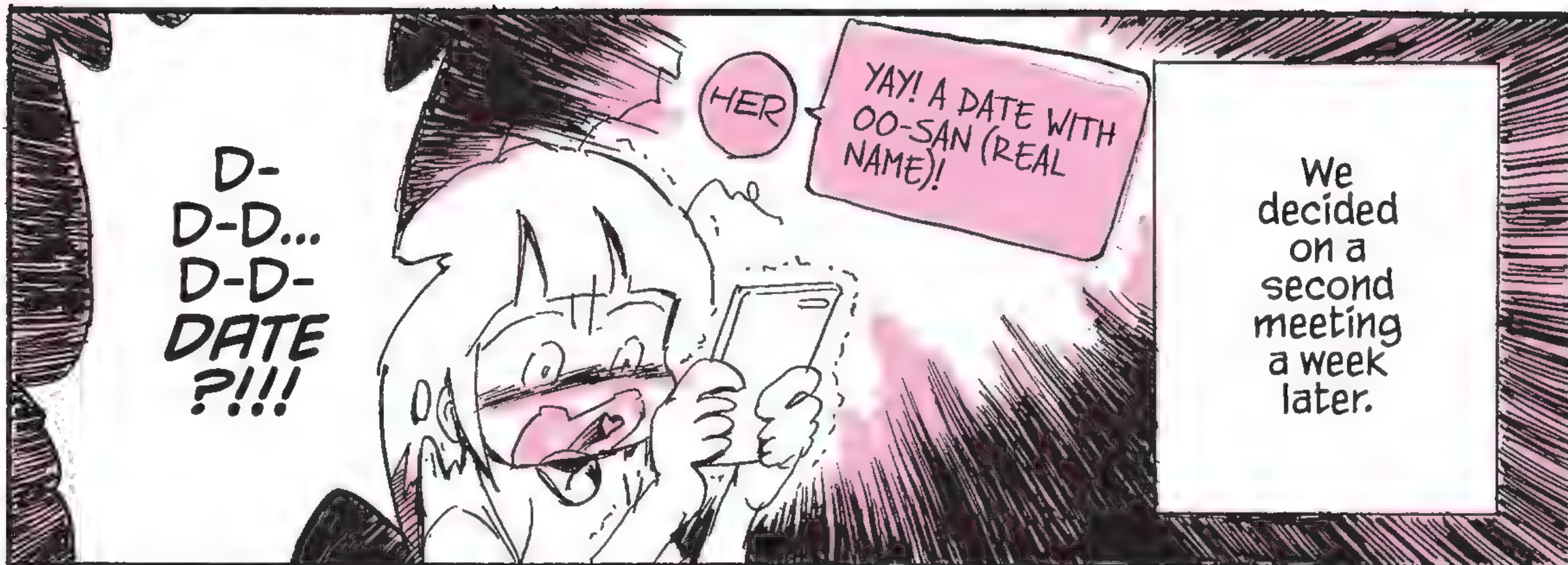


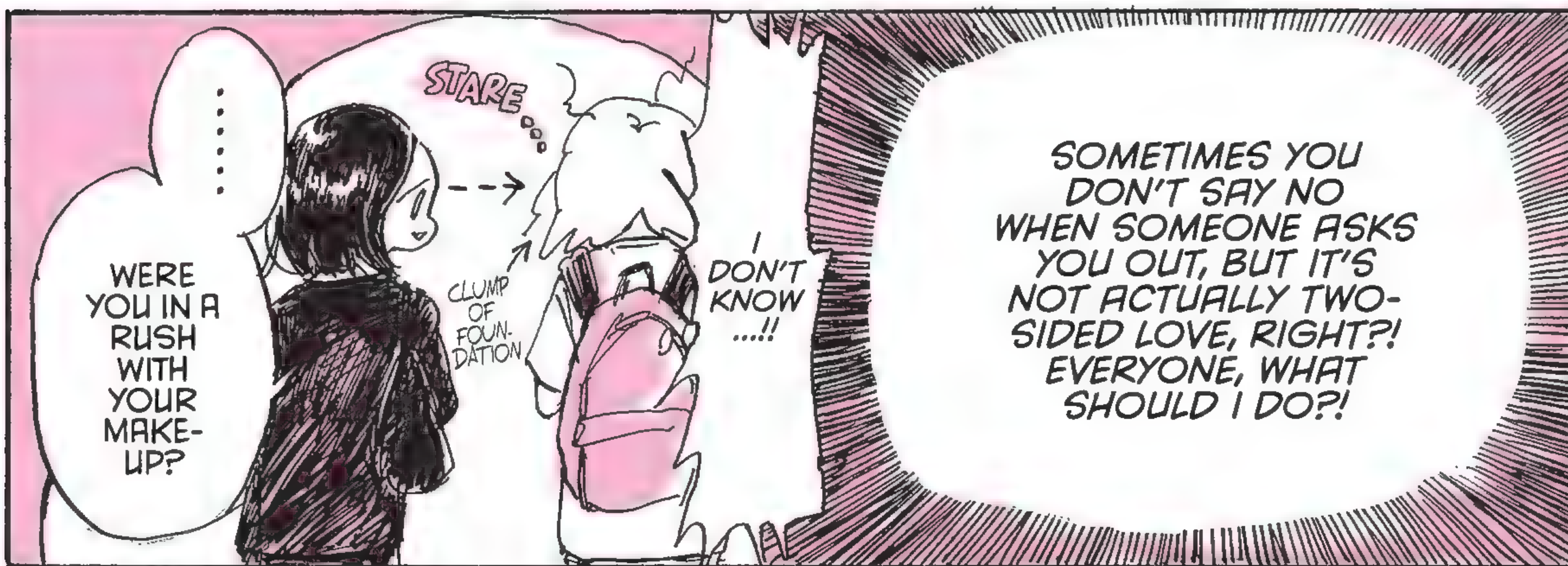
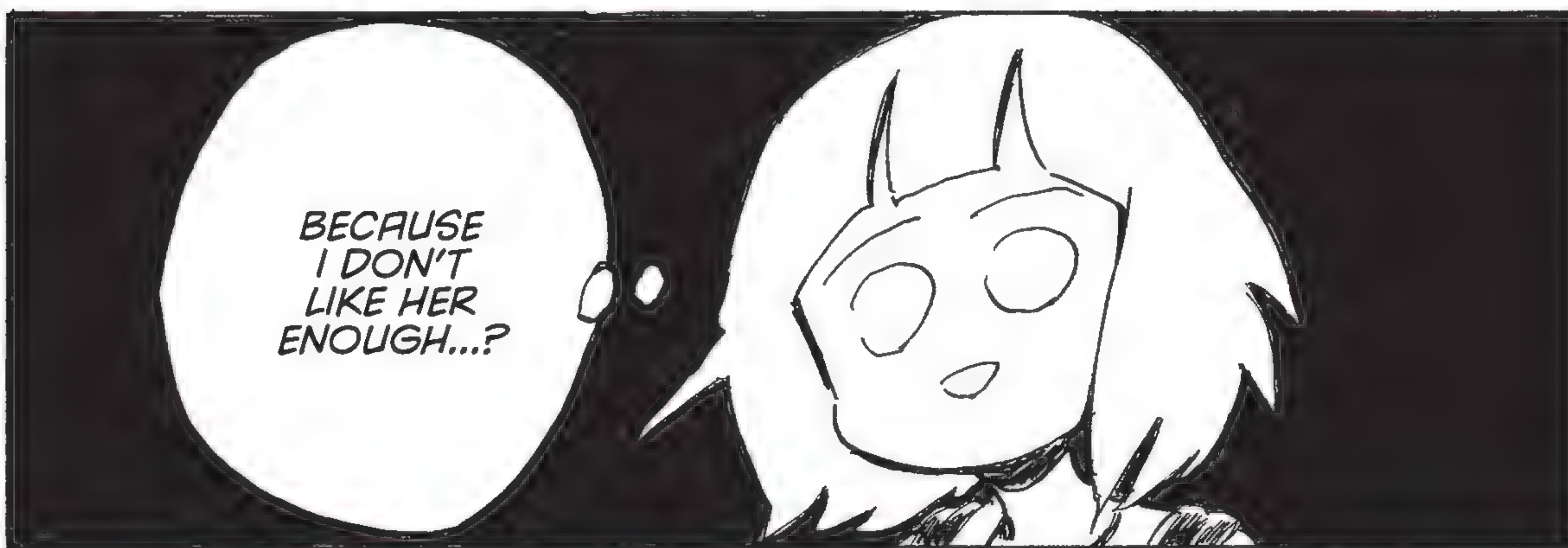
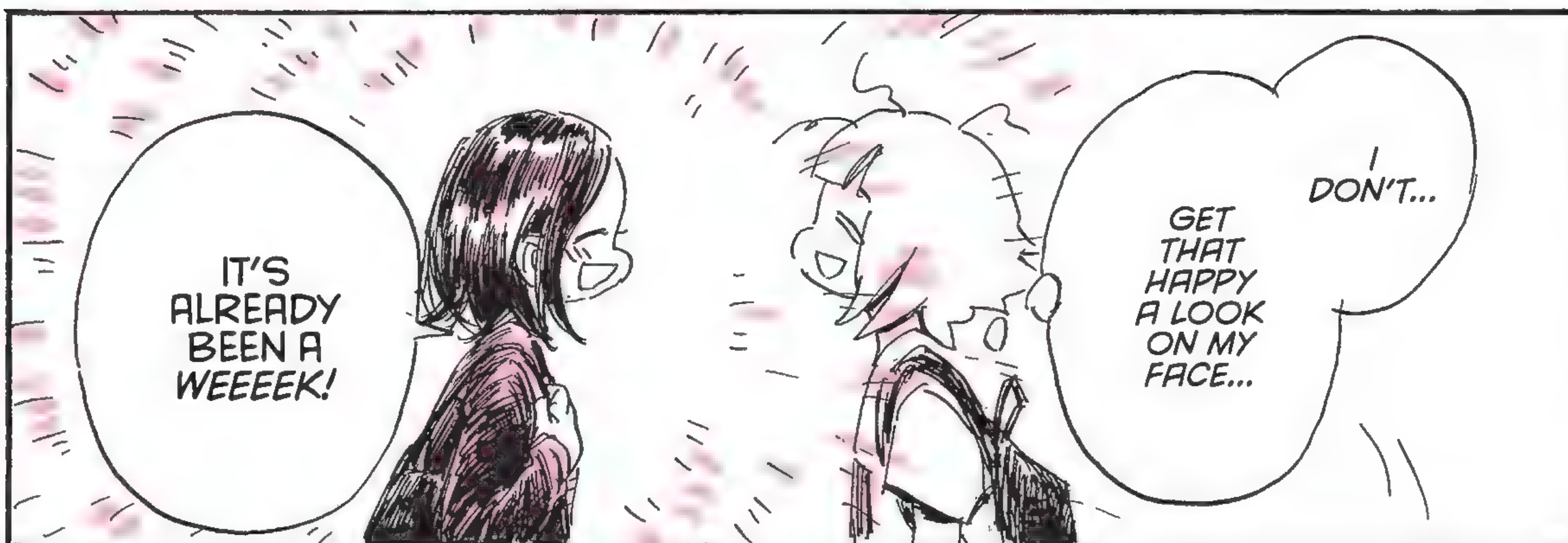


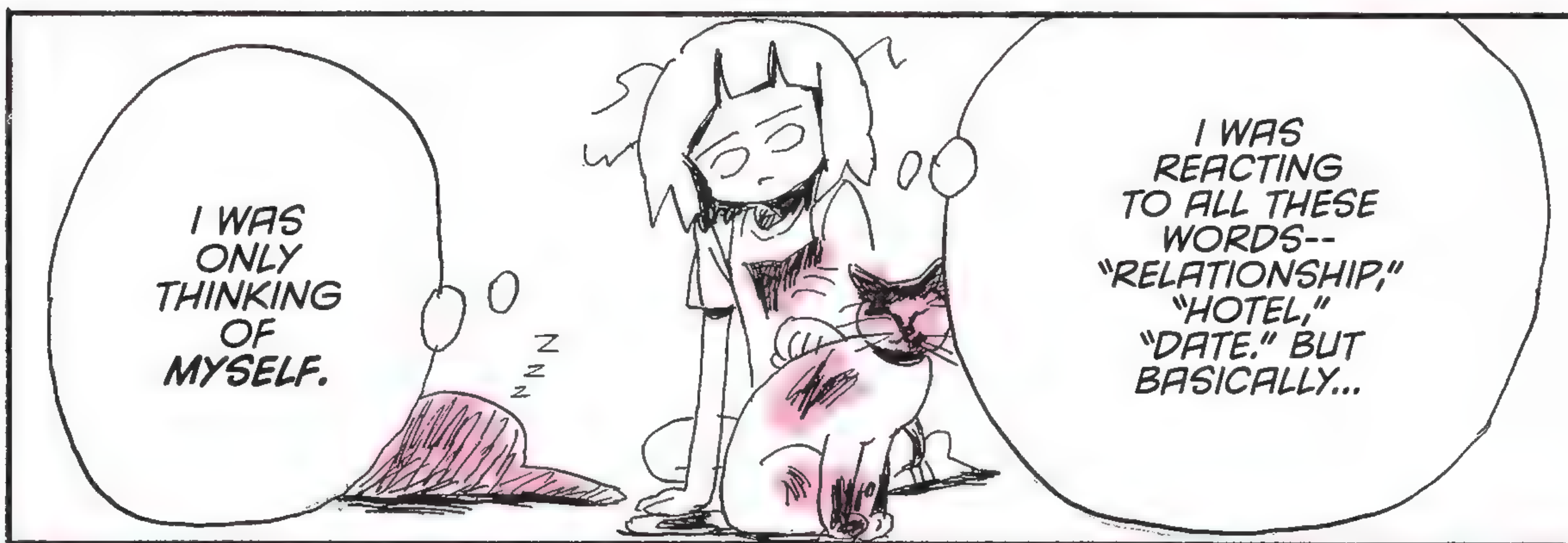
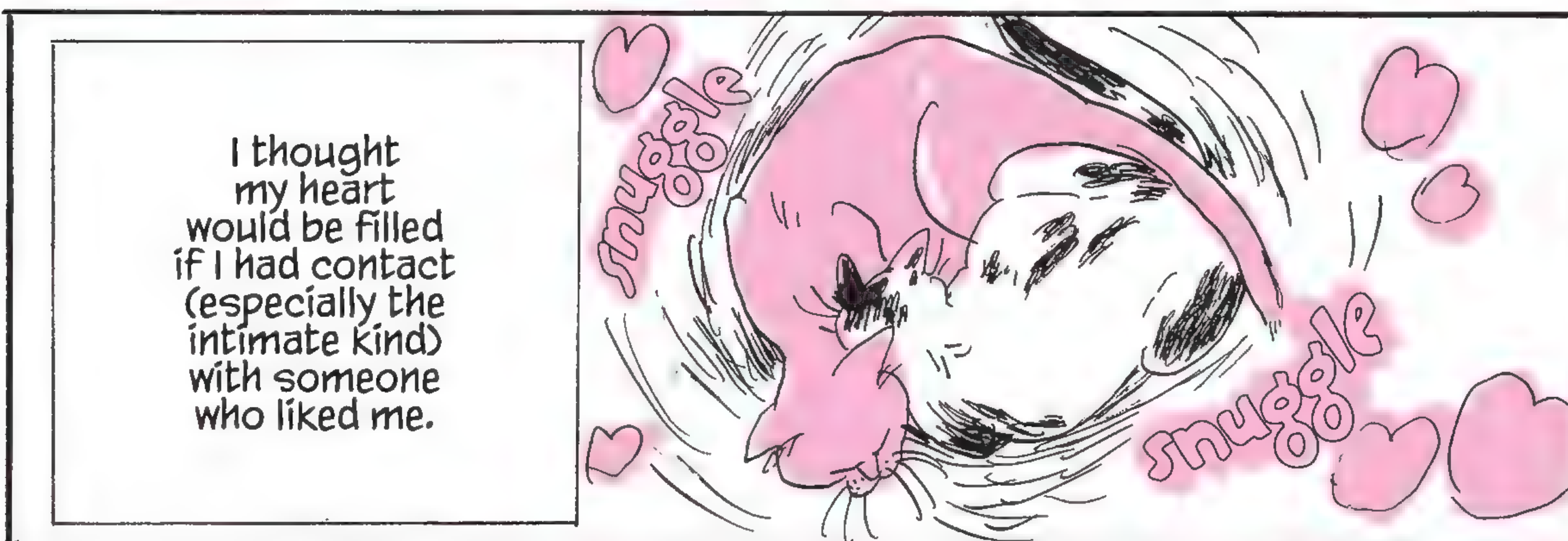
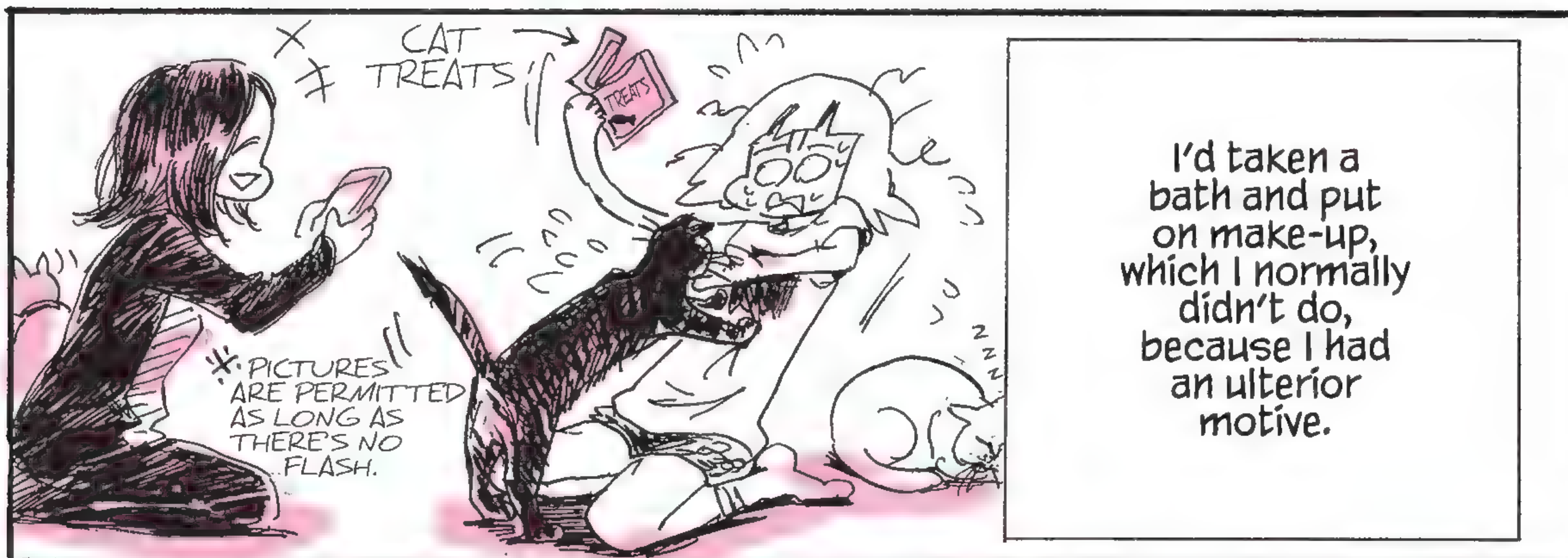


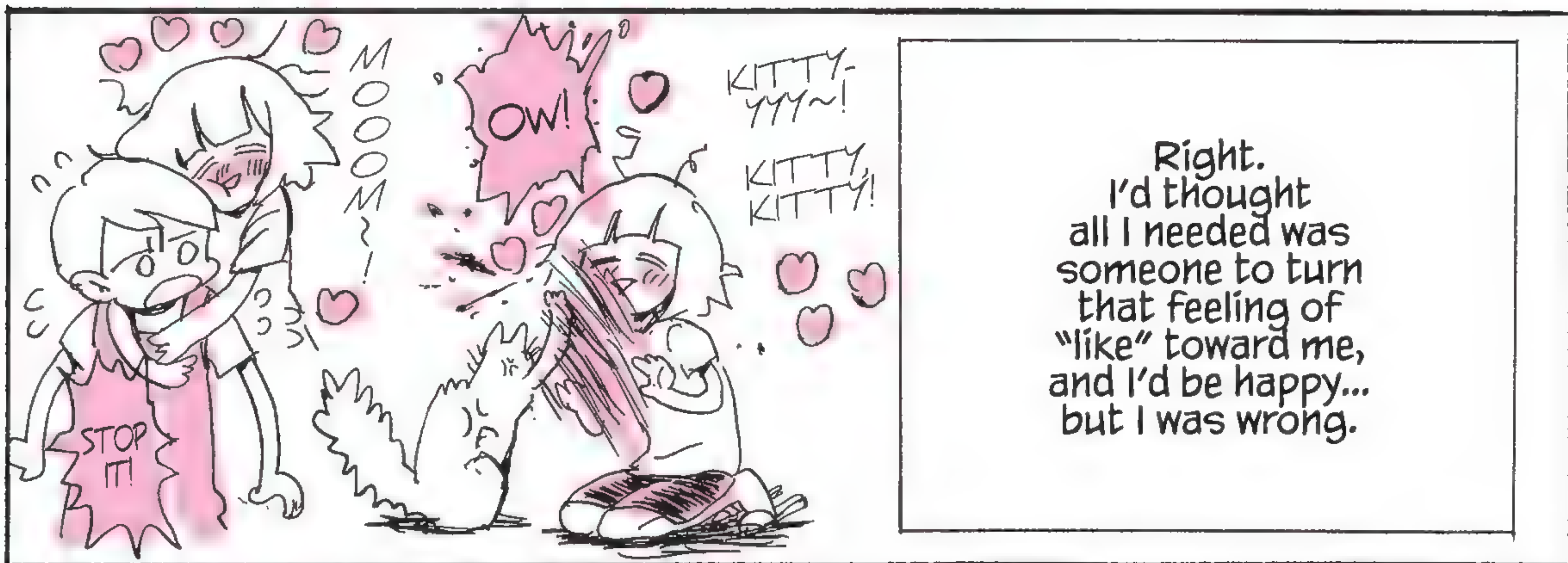
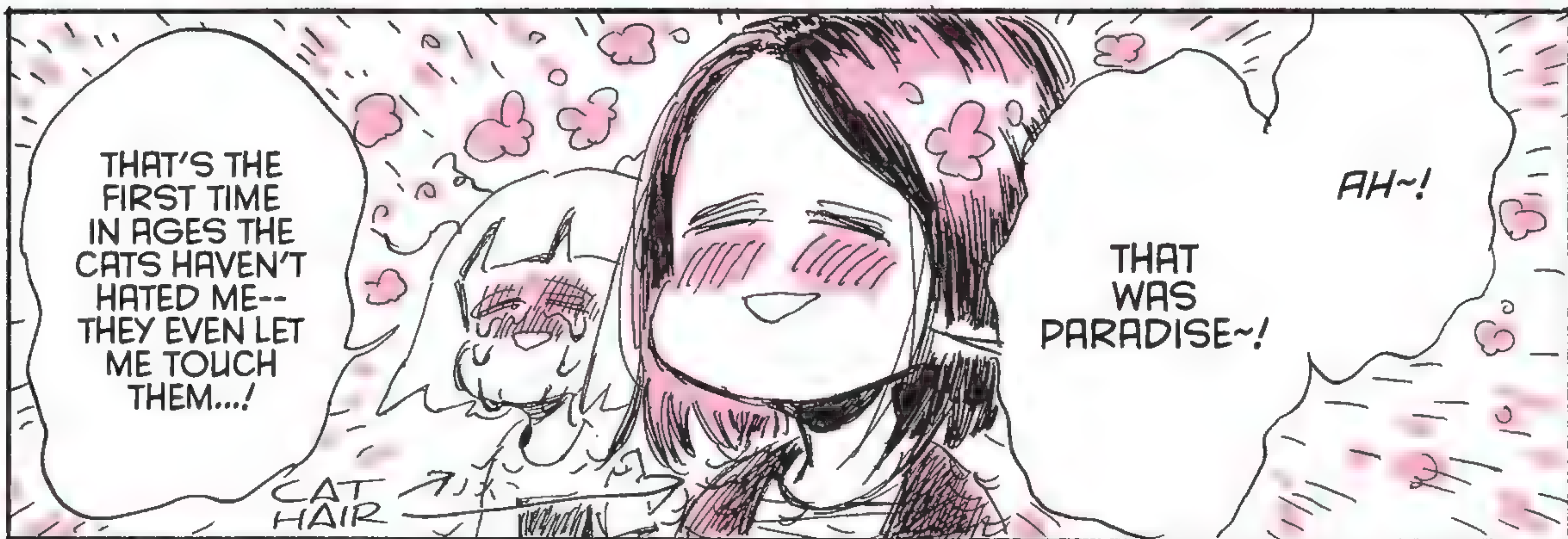
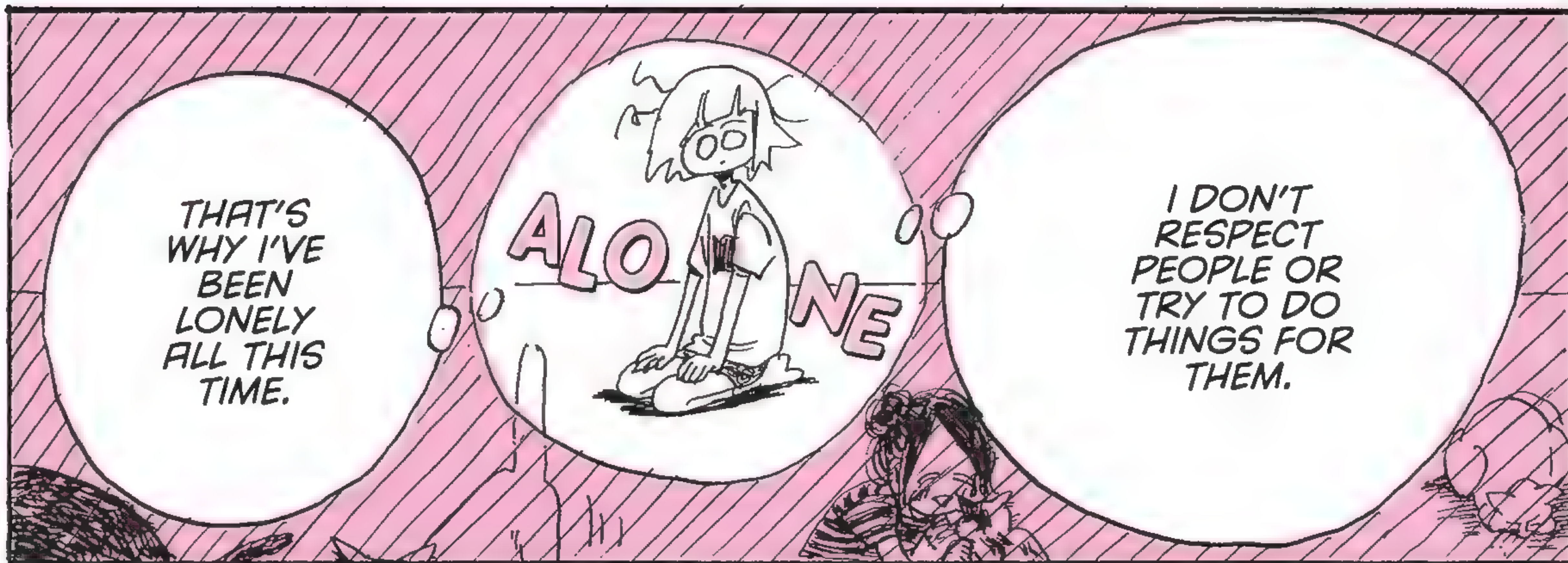




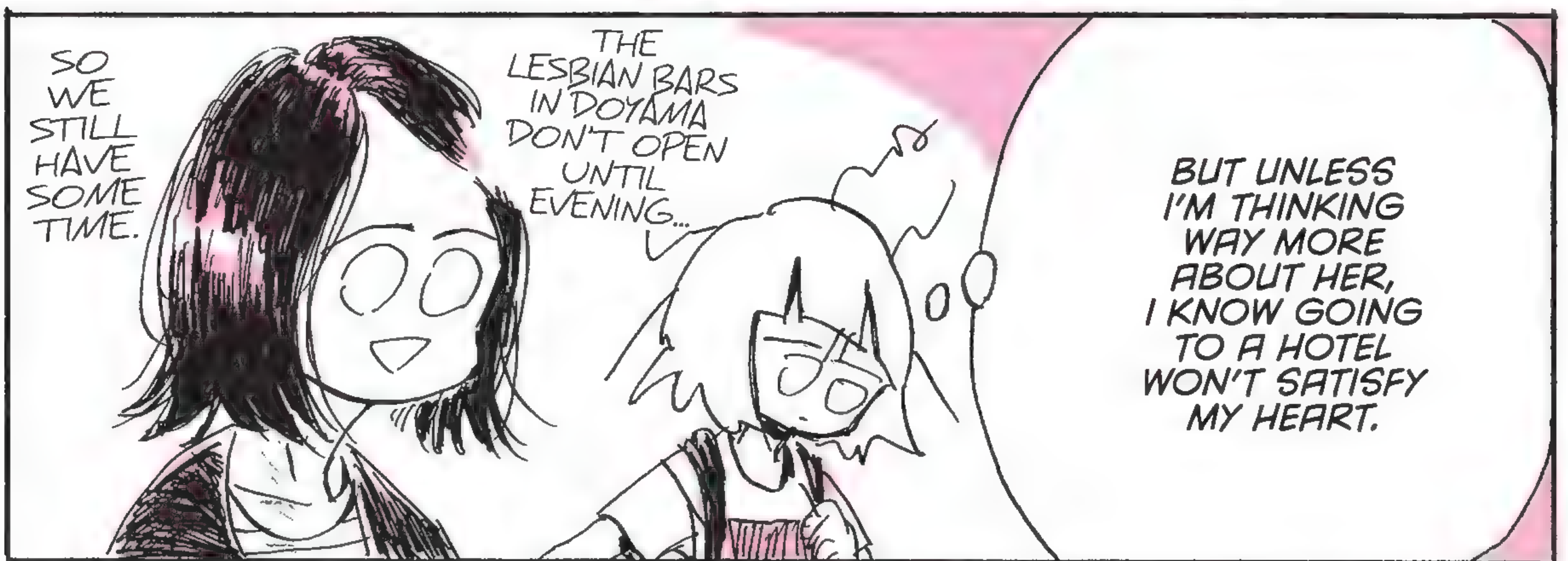
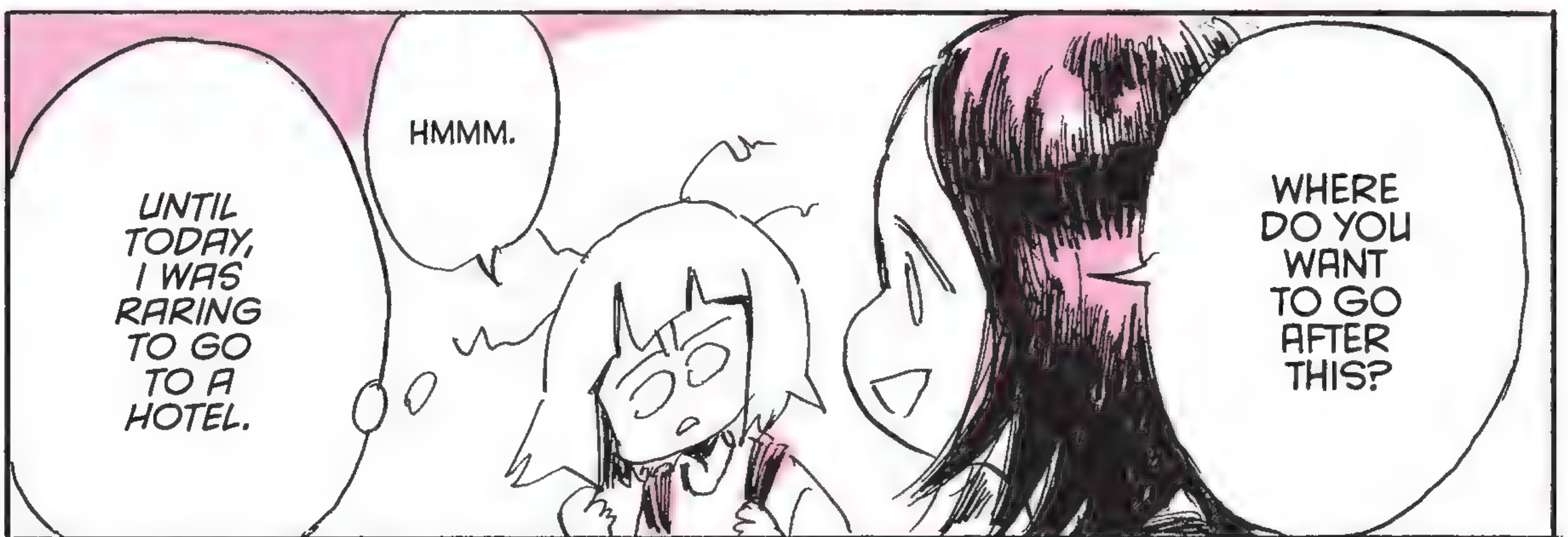
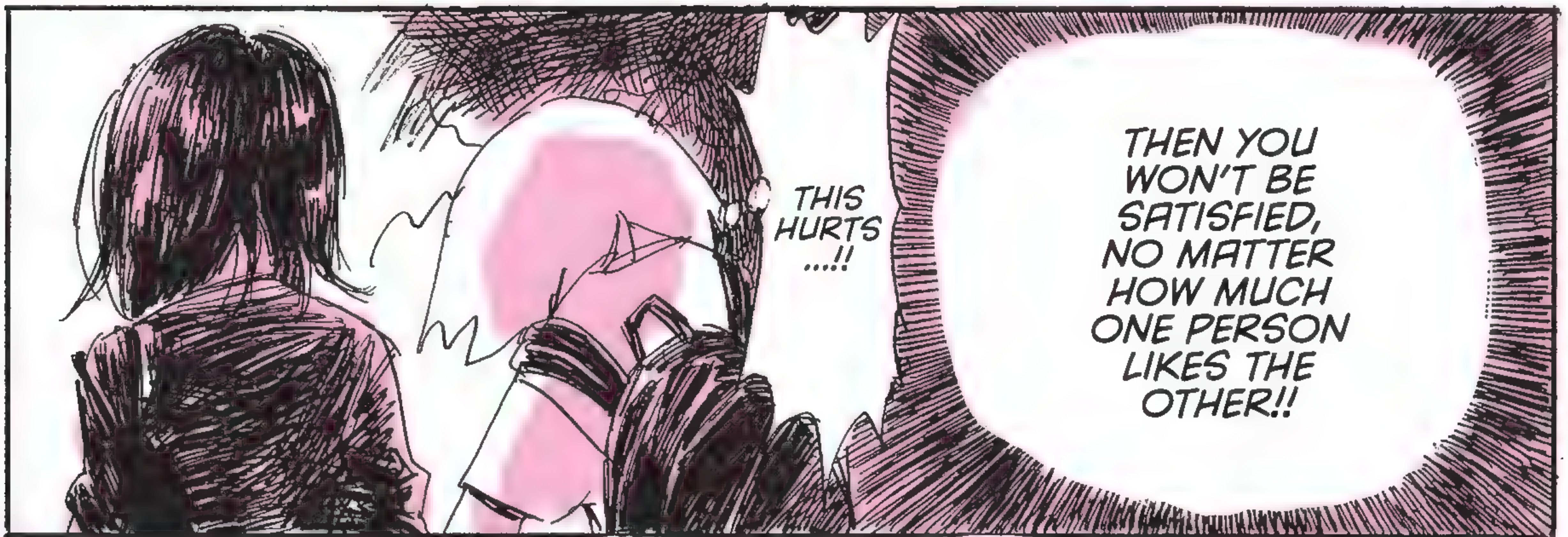








Right.
I'd thought
all I needed was
someone to turn
that feeling of
"like" toward me,
and I'd be happy...
but I was wrong.





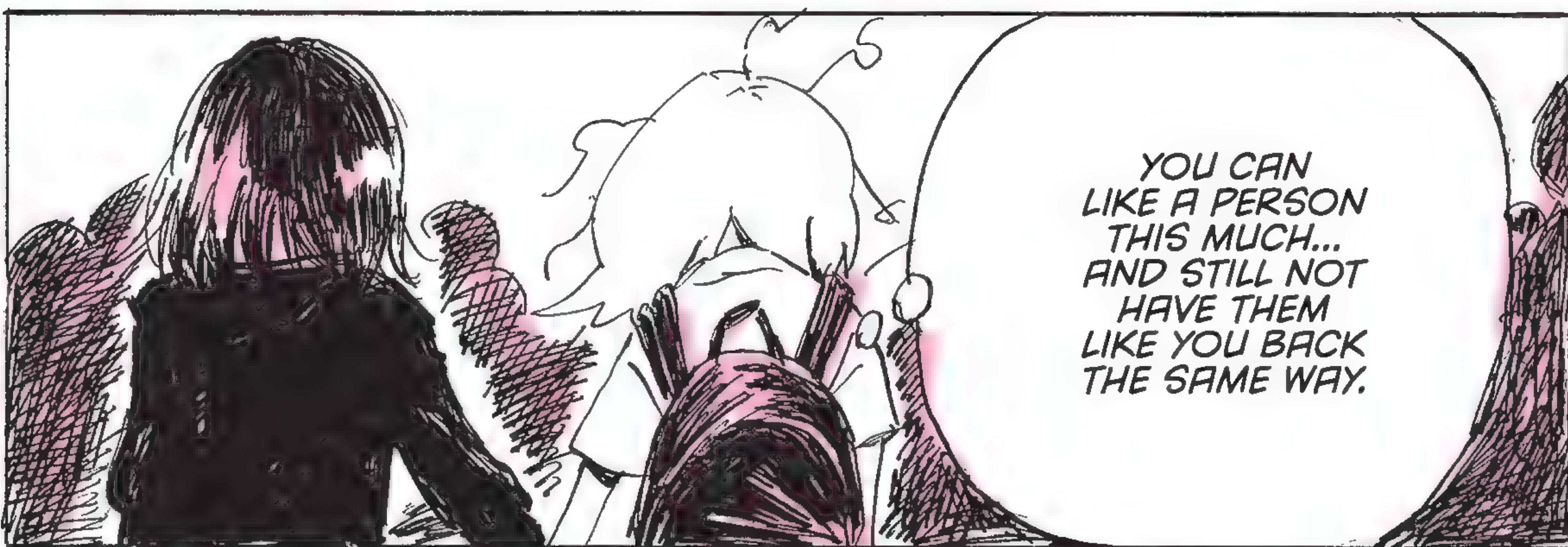


I WANT
TO BE
TOGETHER,
EVEN FOR
JUST A
MINUTE
LONGER.

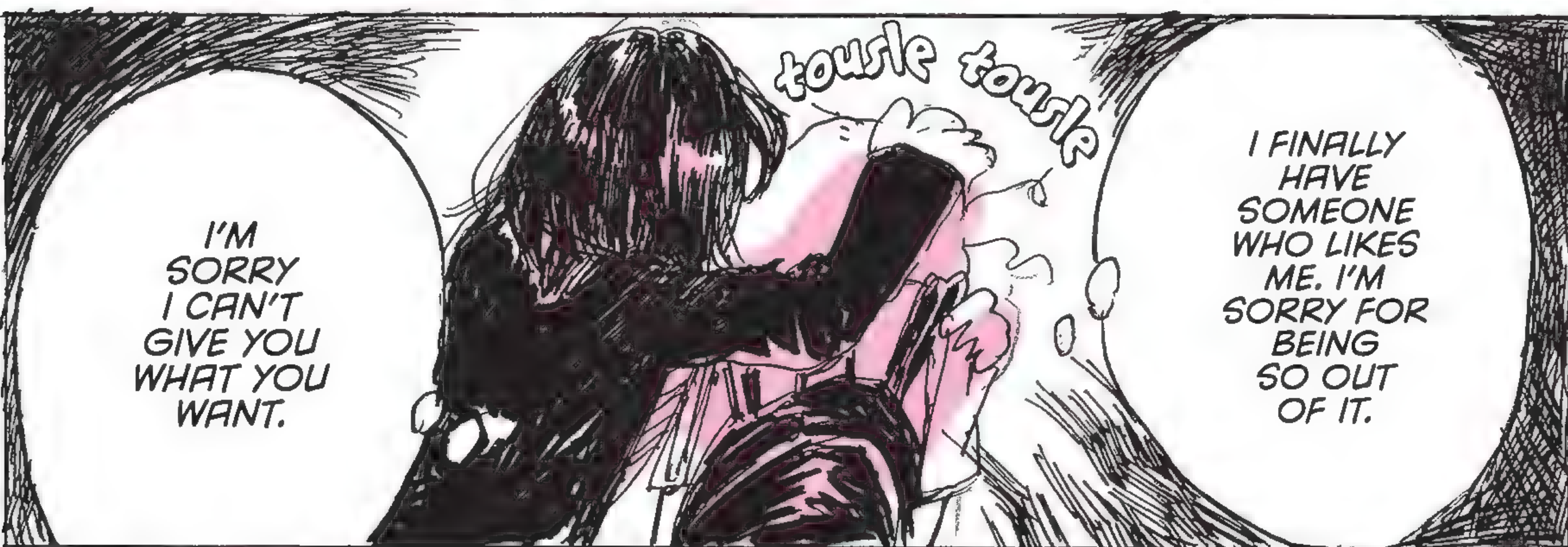
I'D EVEN
BE HAPPY
TO COME
CLEAN YOUR
APARTMENT,
IF YOU WANT.

I REALLY
WANT TO
SEE YOU
HOME!!

THE
TRUTH
IS, I...

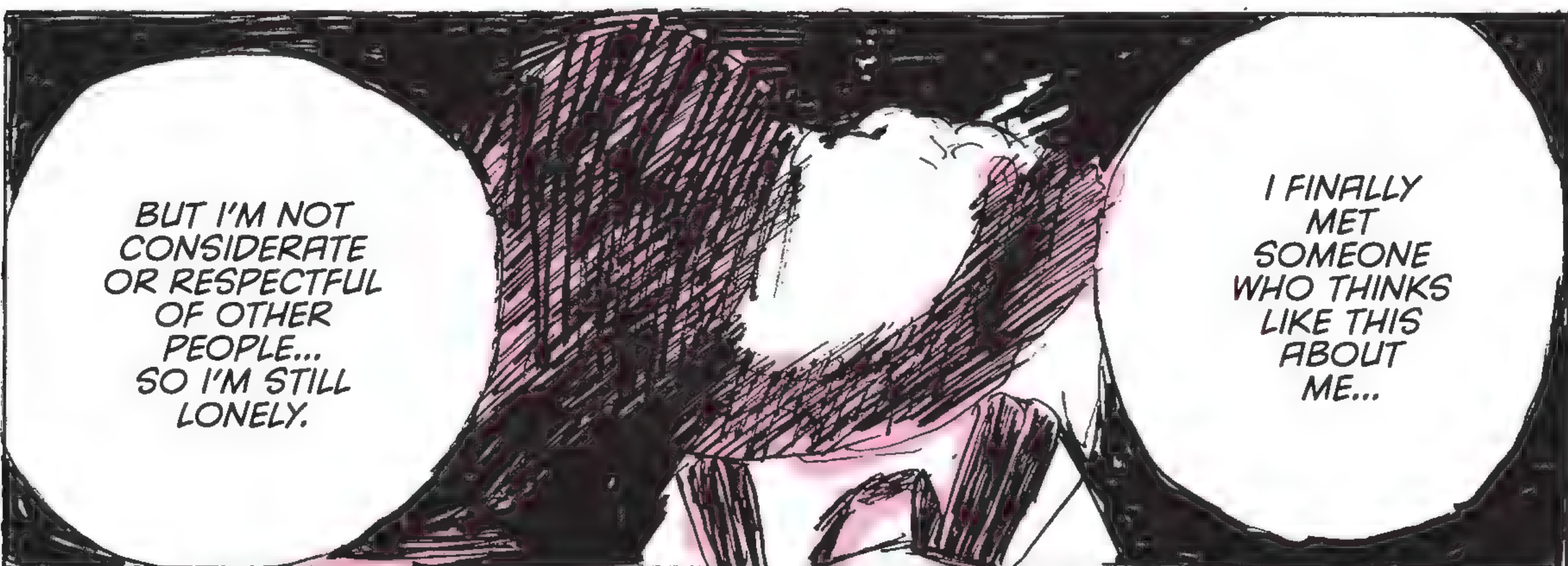


YOU CAN
LIKE A PERSON
THIS MUCH...
AND STILL NOT
HAVE THEM
LIKE YOU BACK
THE SAME WAY.



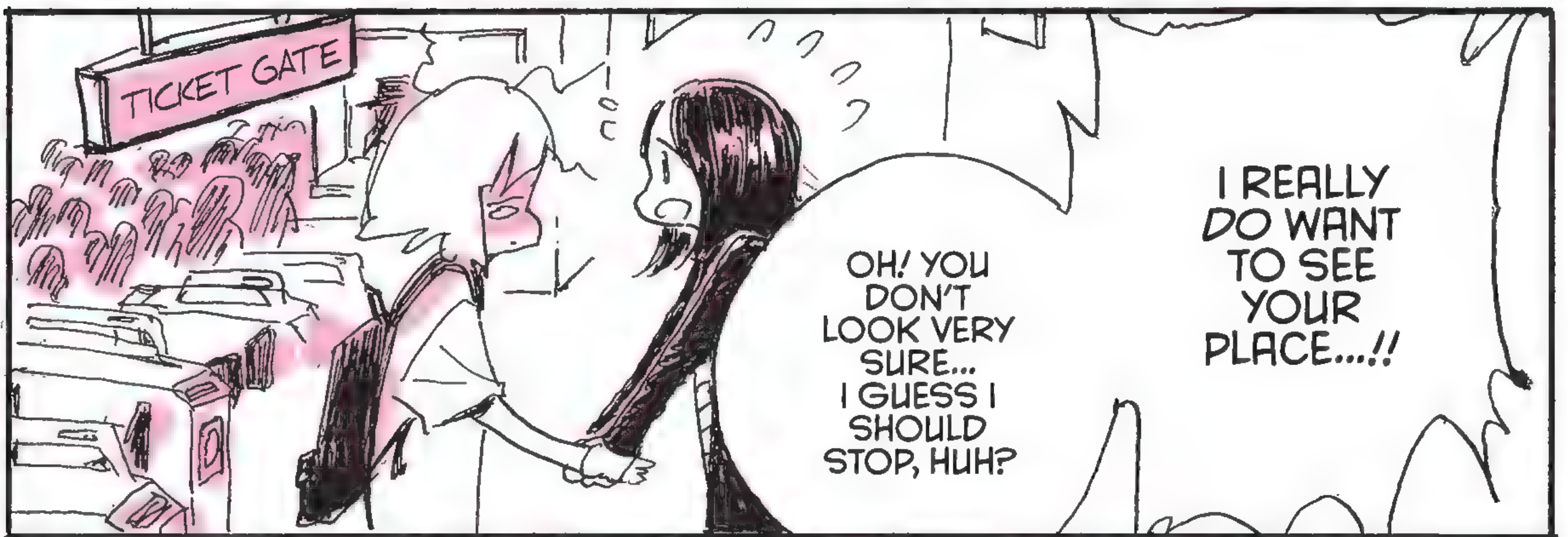
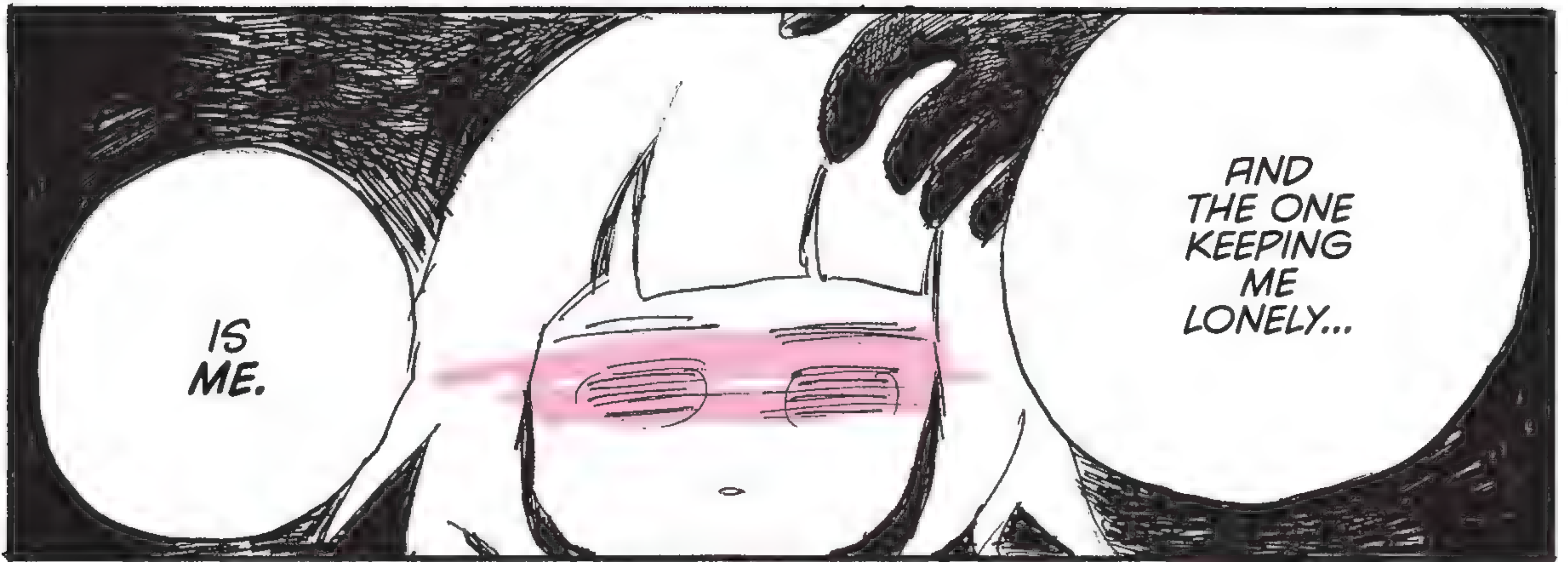
I'M
SORRY
I CAN'T
GIVE YOU
WHAT YOU
WANT.

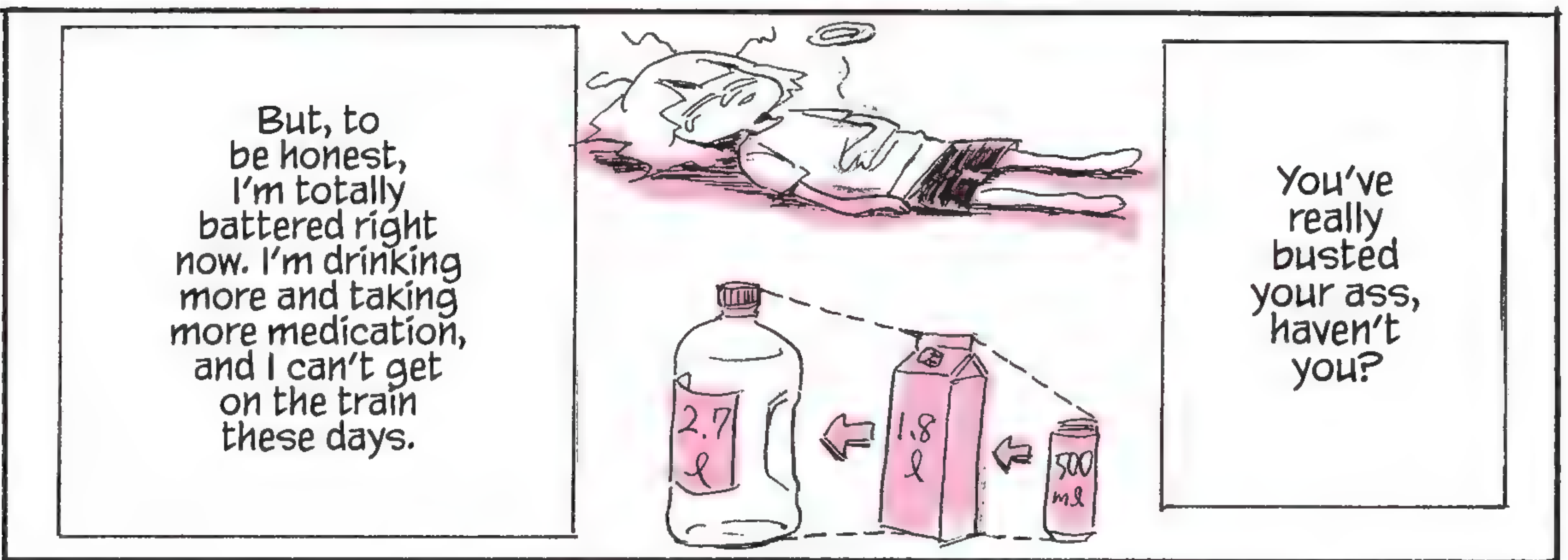
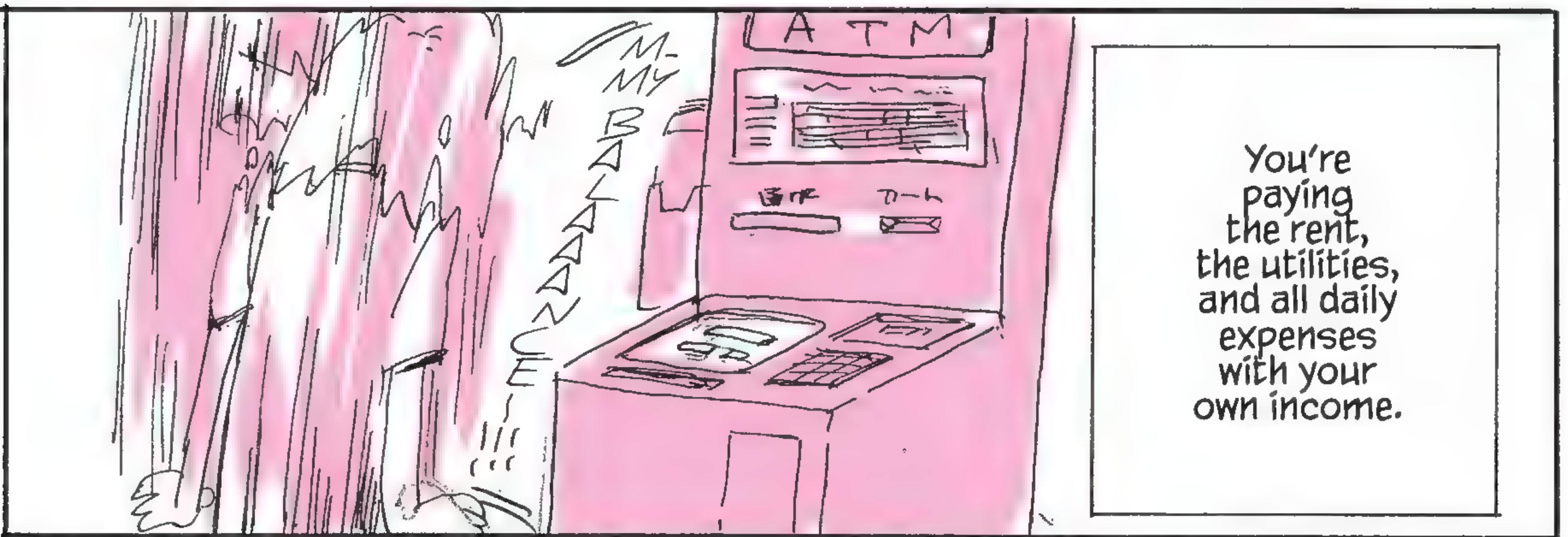
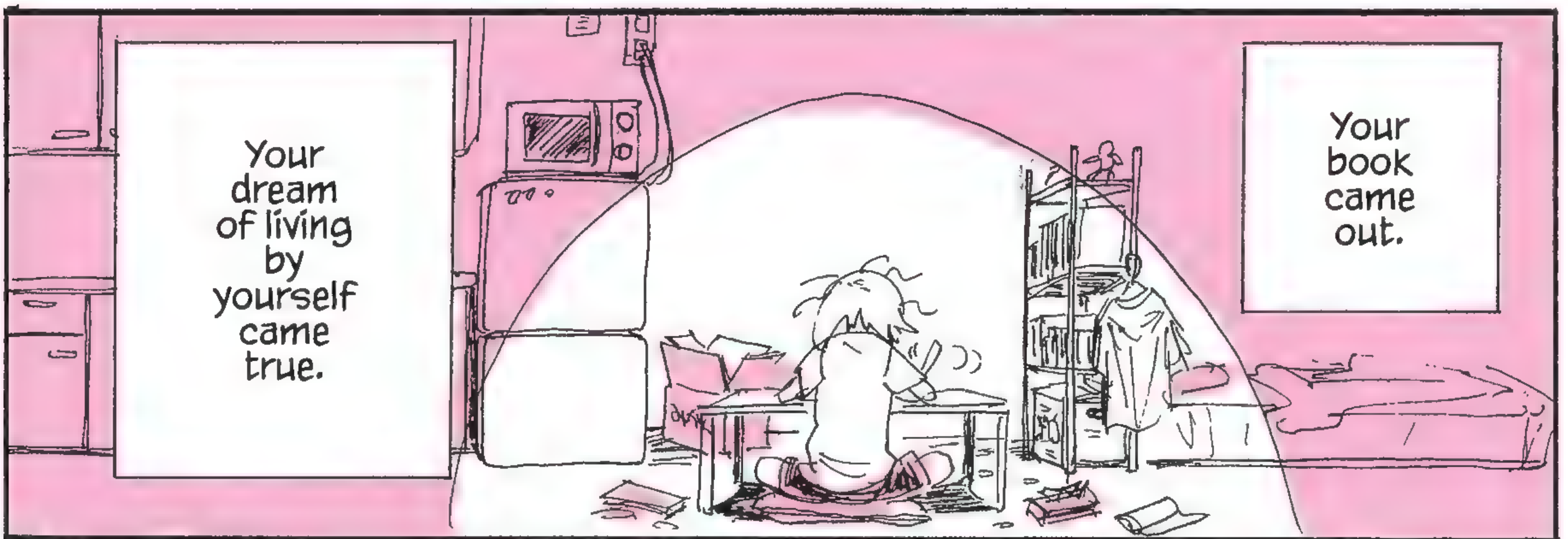
I FINALLY
HAVE
SOMEONE
WHO LIKES
ME. I'M
SORRY FOR
BEING
SO OUT
OF IT.



BUT I'M NOT
CONSIDERATE
OR RESPECTFUL
OF OTHER
PEOPLE...
SO I'M STILL
LONELY.

I FINALLY
MET
SOMEONE
WHO THINKS
LIKE THIS
ABOUT
ME...

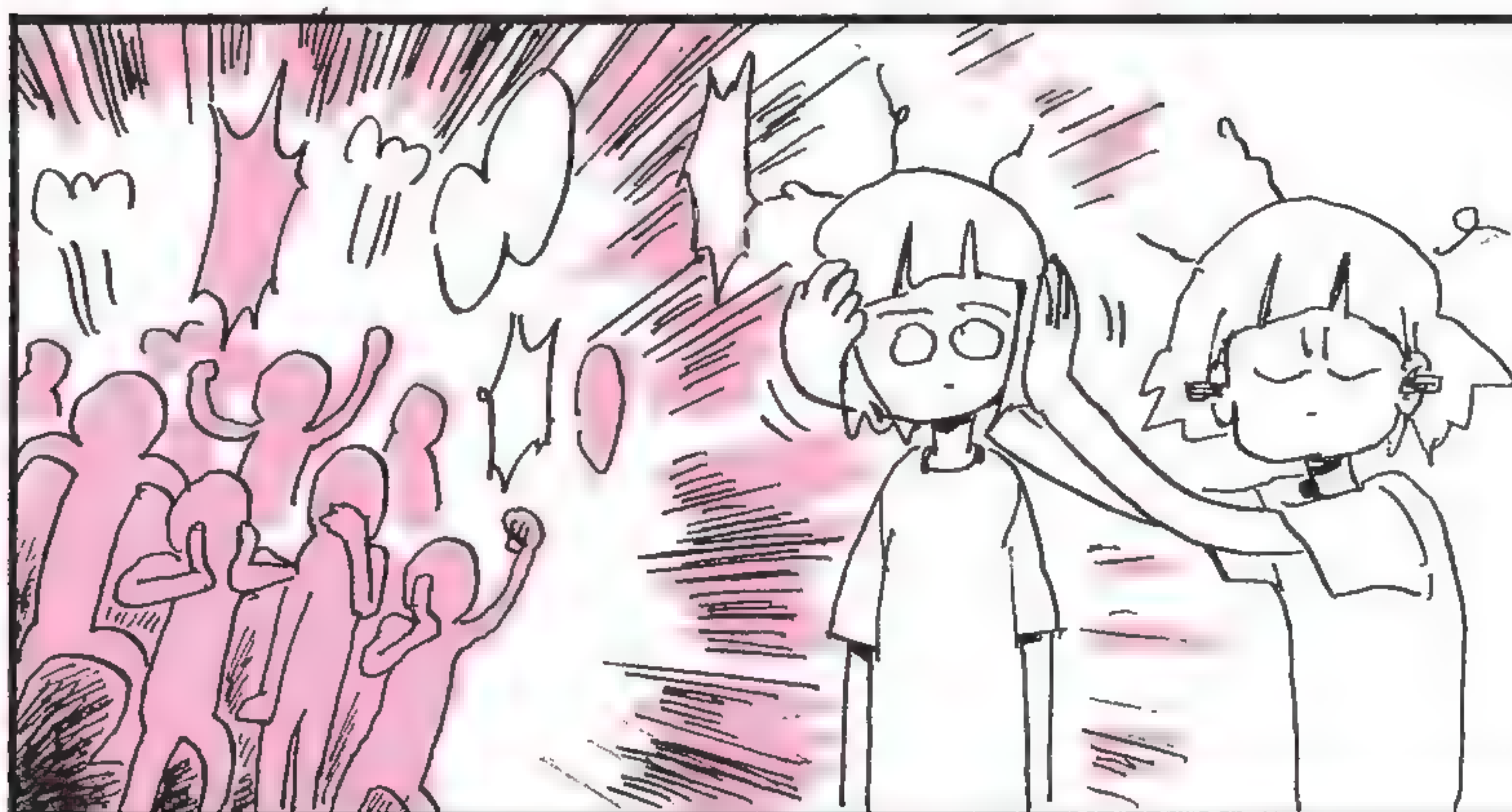




Once, when I stopped caring about the future, I cut my neck with kitchen scissors-- but it turns out the carotid artery is on the *inside* of your neck muscles. Those muscles hurt for a long time after that.



I've seriously thought, a bunch of times, that I can't do these strips any longer.



I don't know what my mom or dad or anyone else is saying...

From now on, I'm fine with getting hurt again, so please don't give up.



but you've really worked hard and have grown so much for me.

And please make sure to get that "loving and being loved" thing.

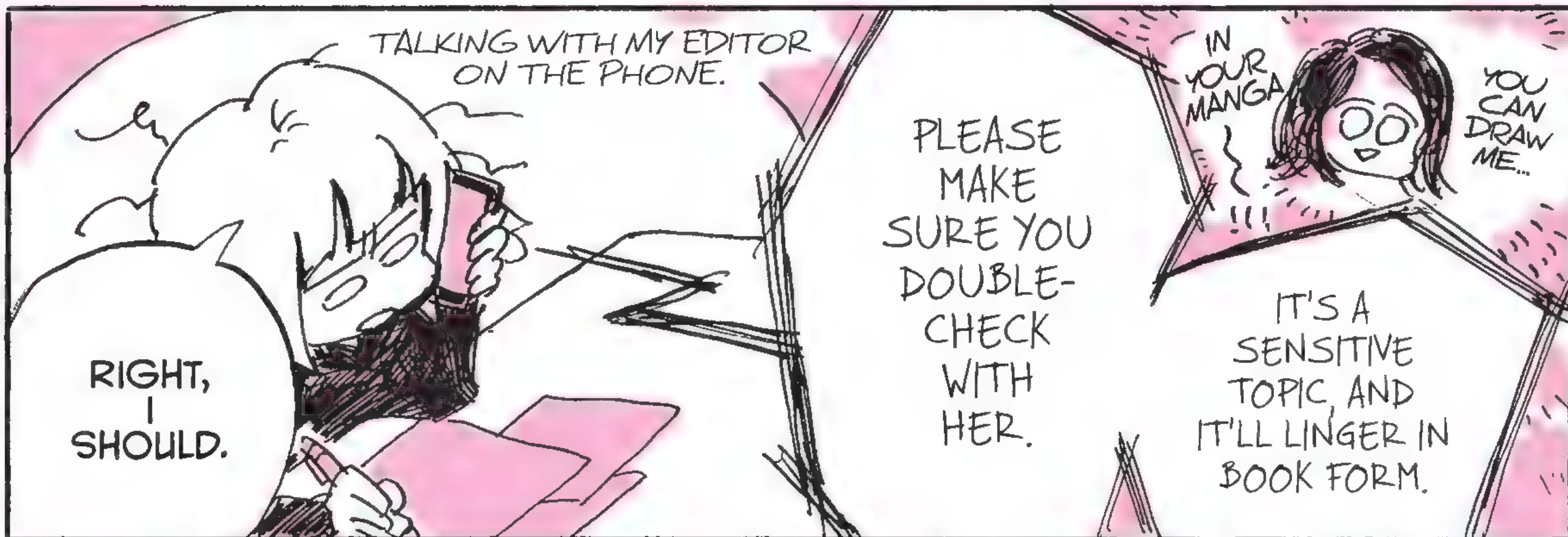
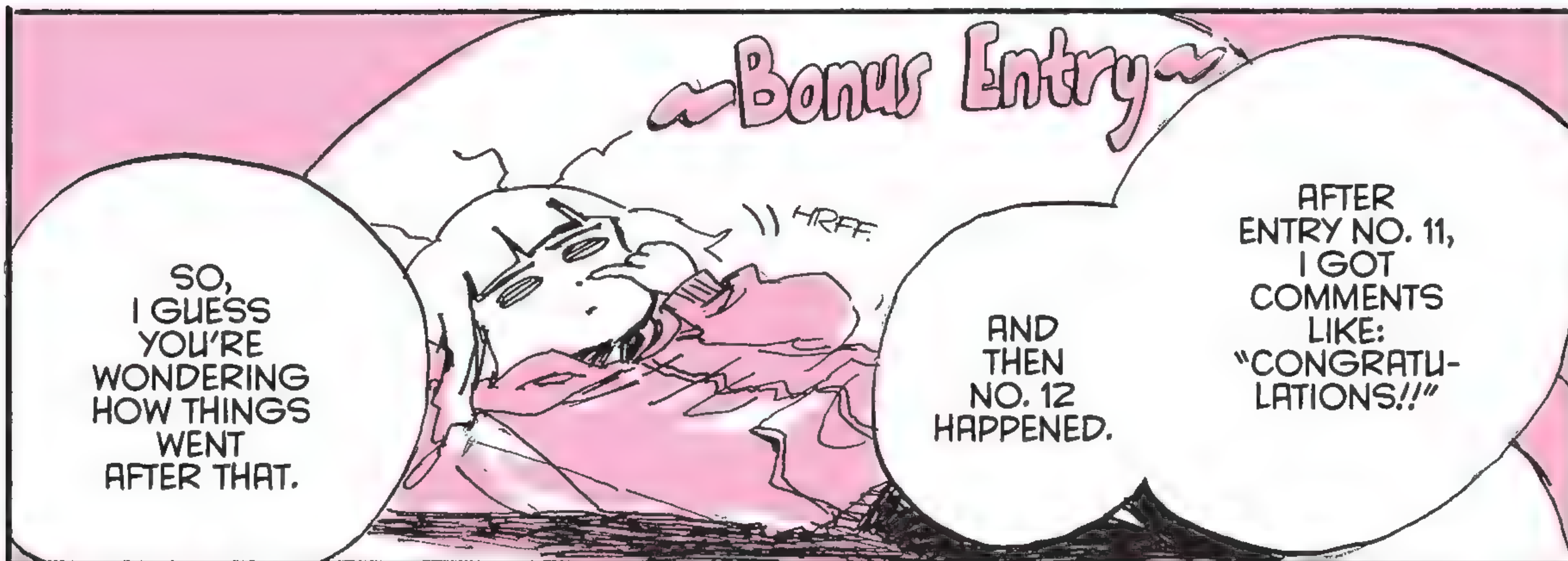


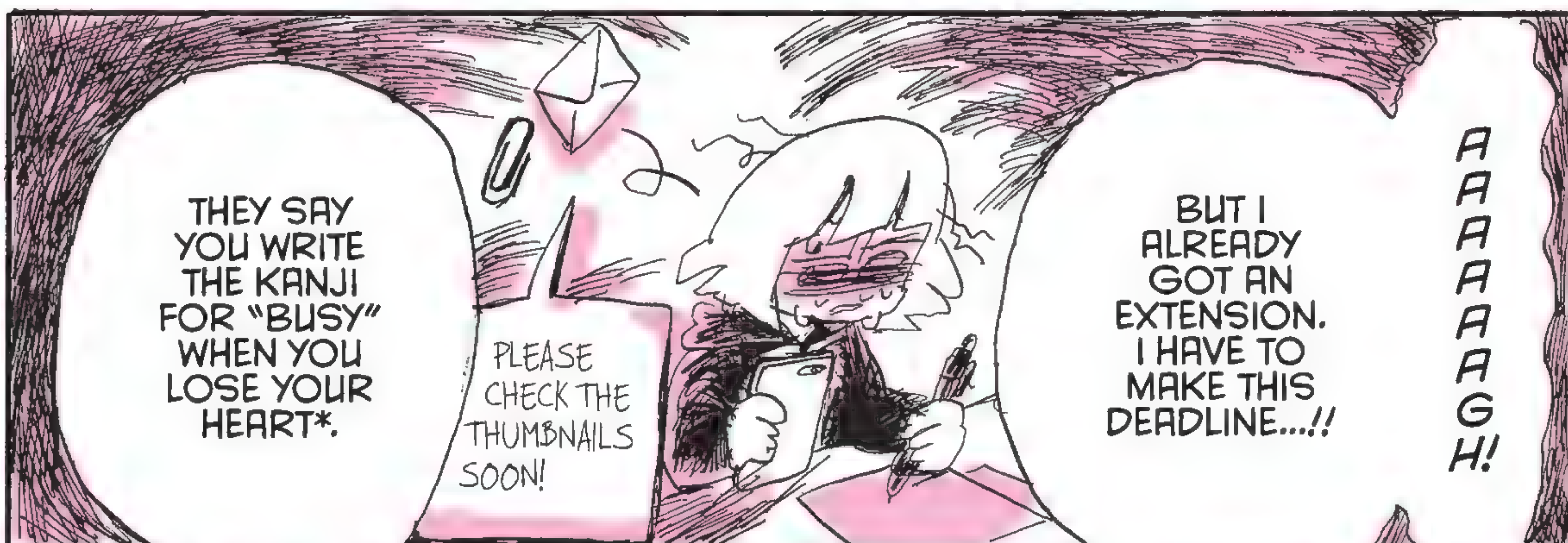
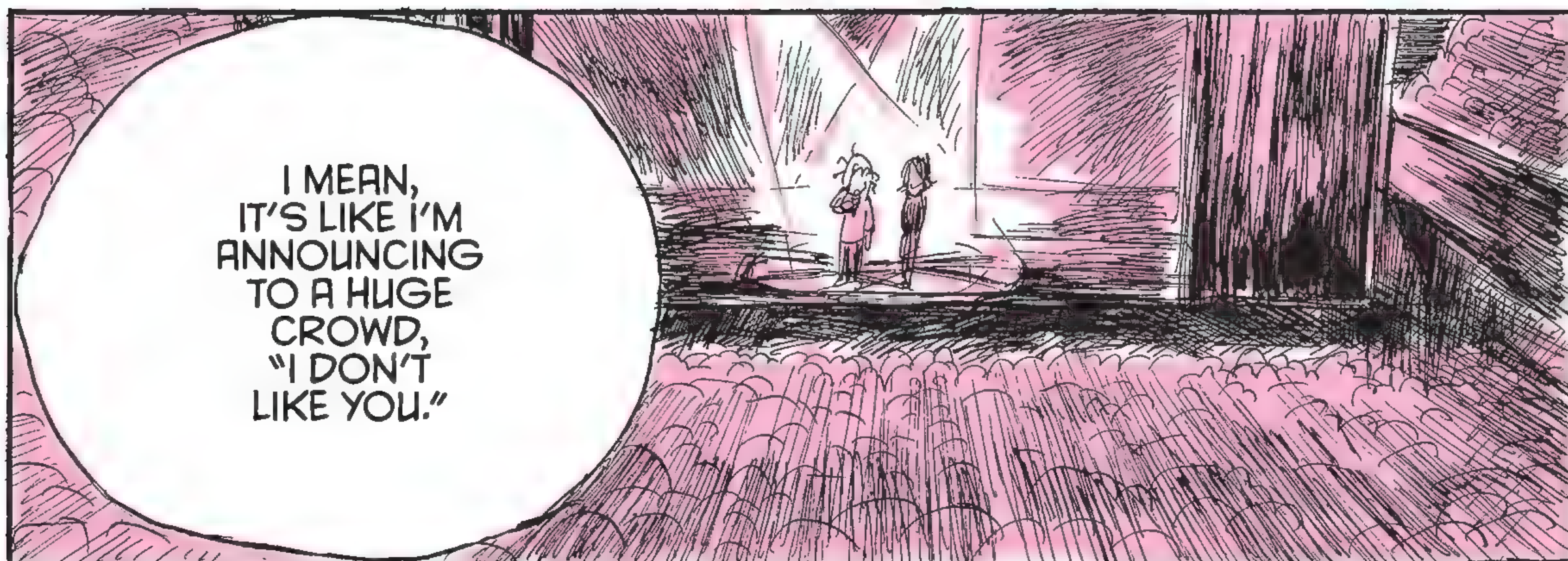
Please do your job well!



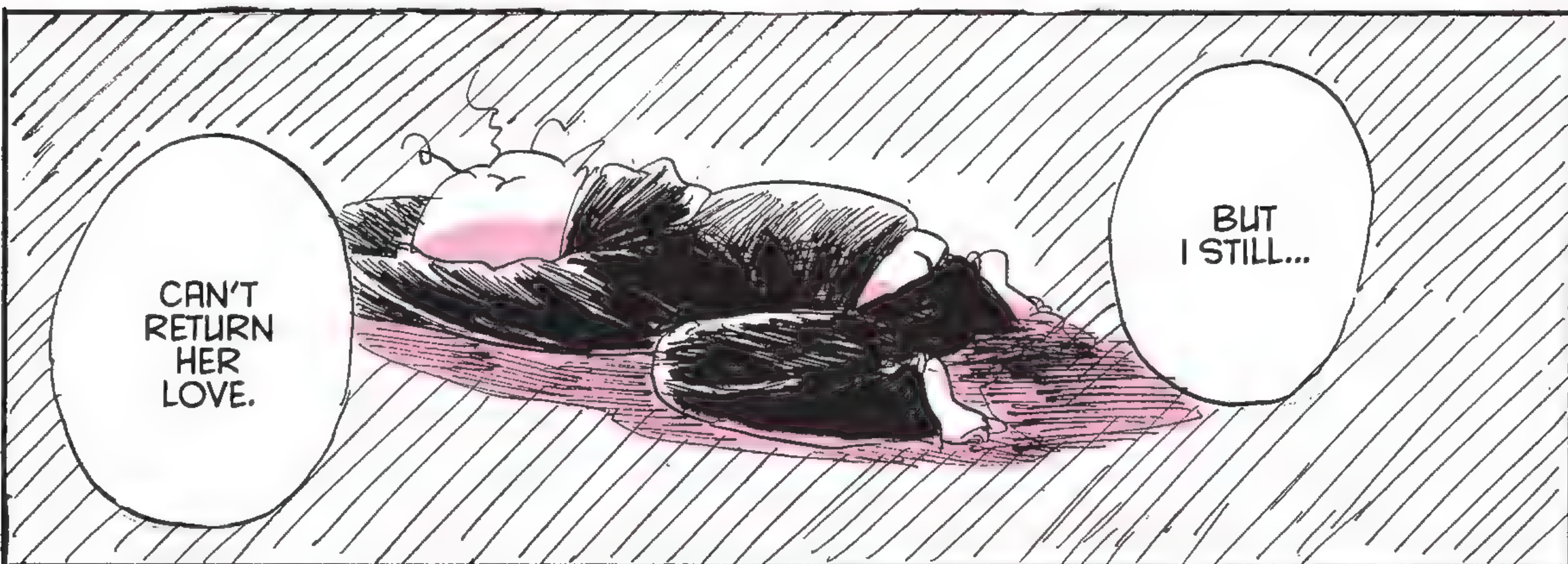
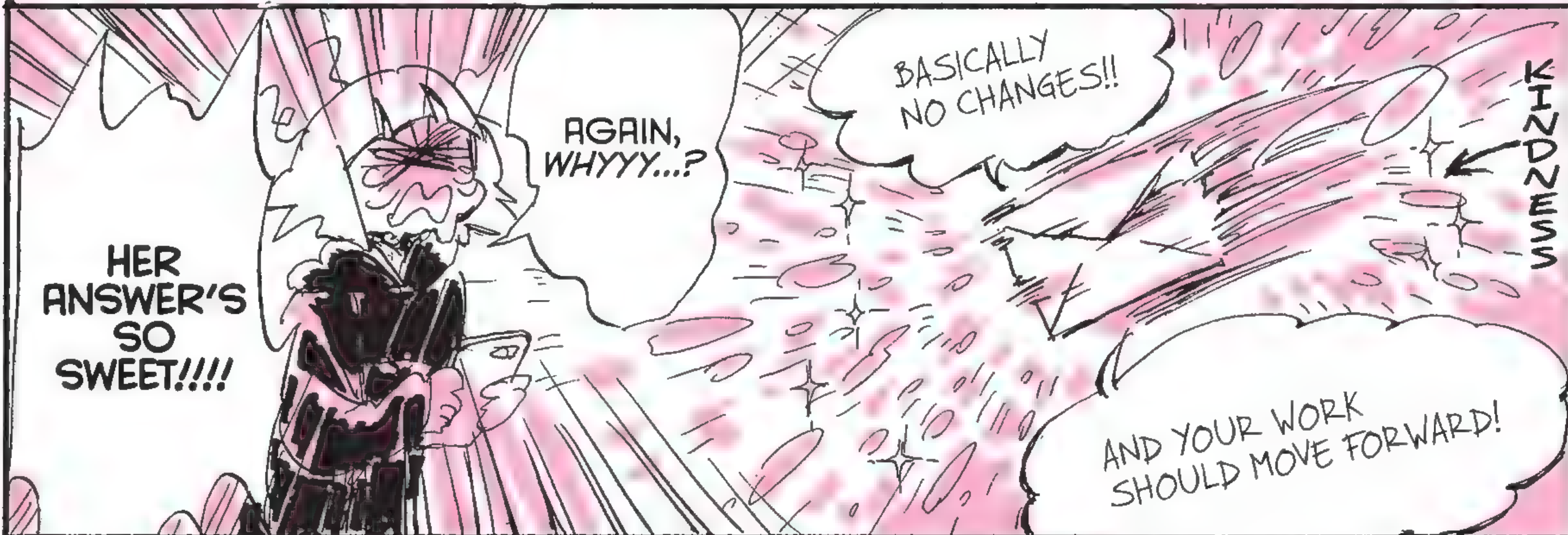
How
are you
doing,
out there
in the
future?

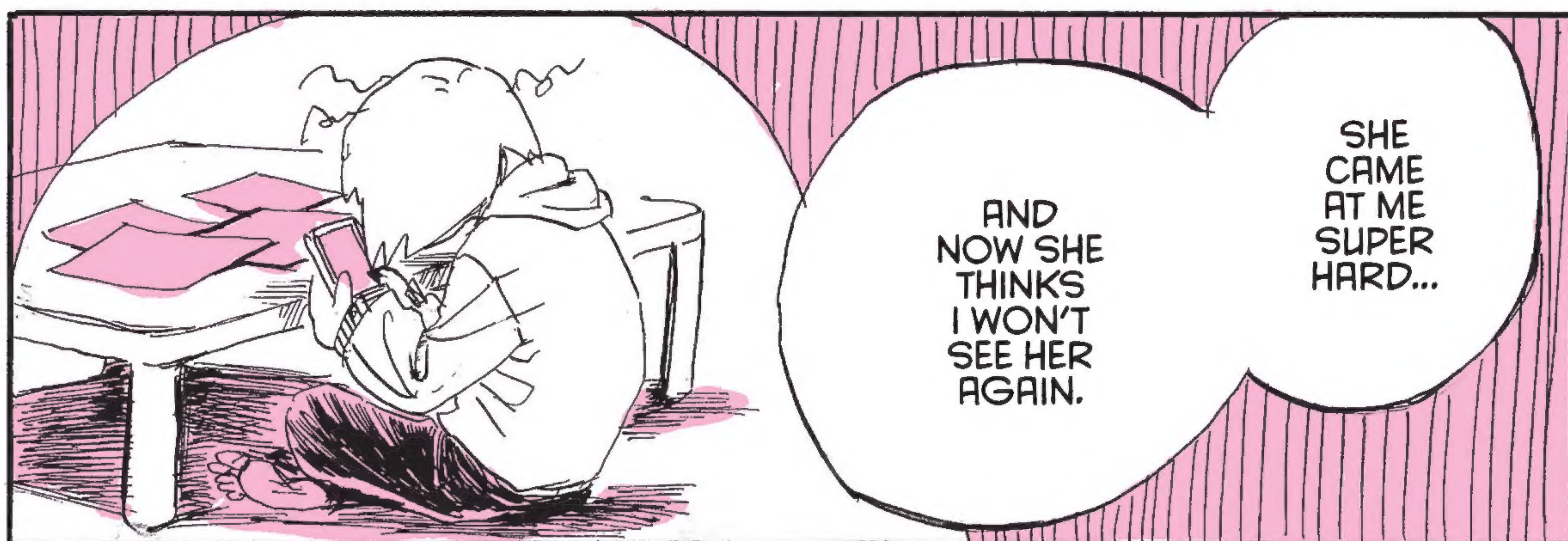
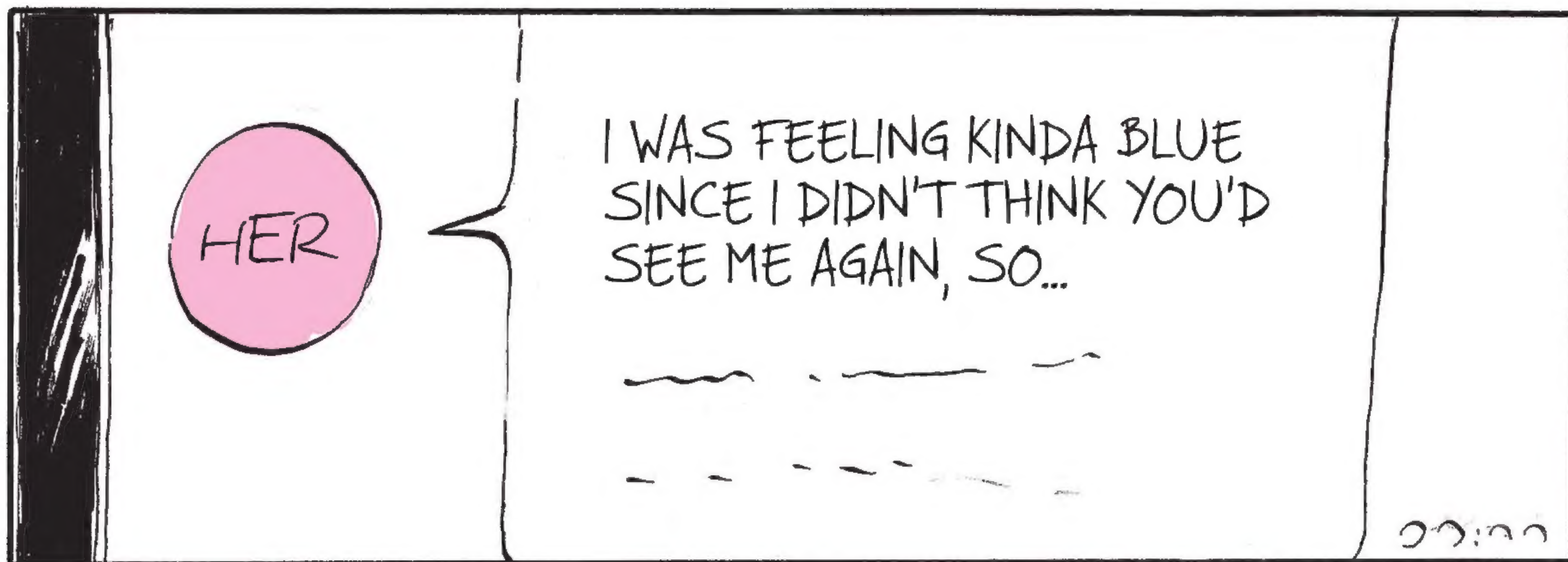
Collects chapters from 5/23, 5/30, 6/13, 6/27, 7/11, 7/25, 8/8, 8/22, 9/12, 9/26, 10/24, and 10/31.

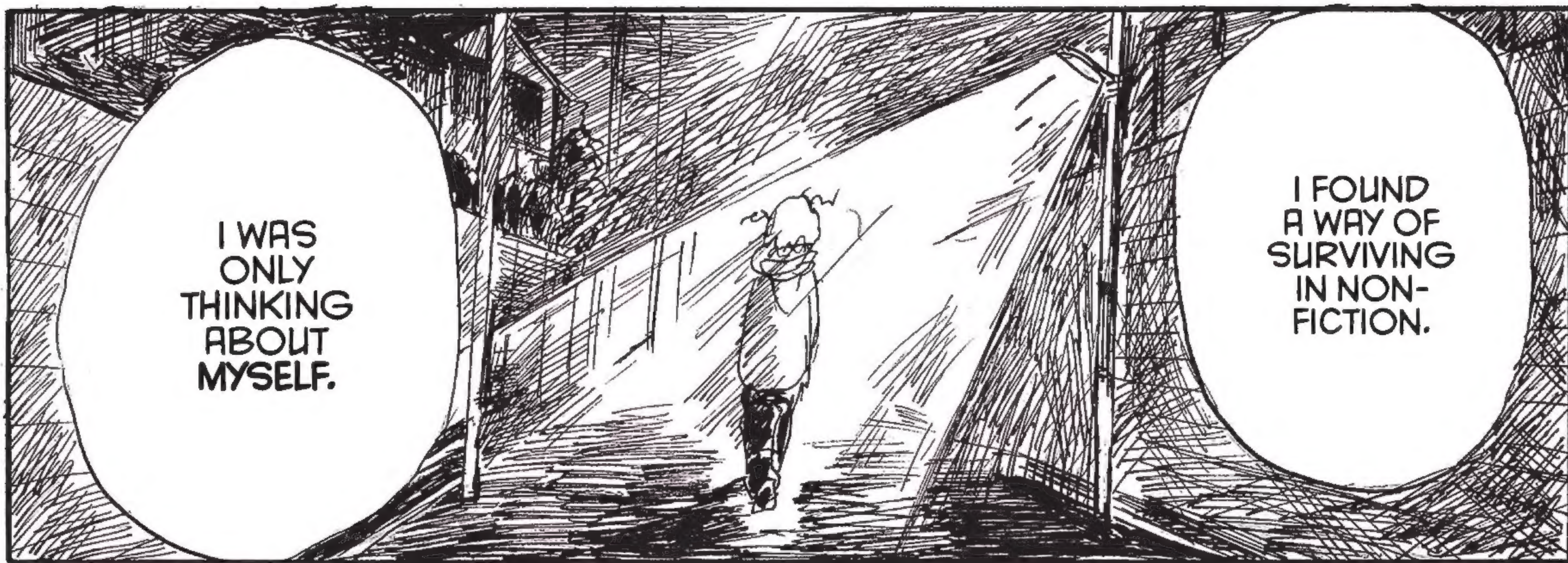




*The kanji for "busy (忙しい)" is written with the characters for "heart/mind (心)" and "lose (亡)."

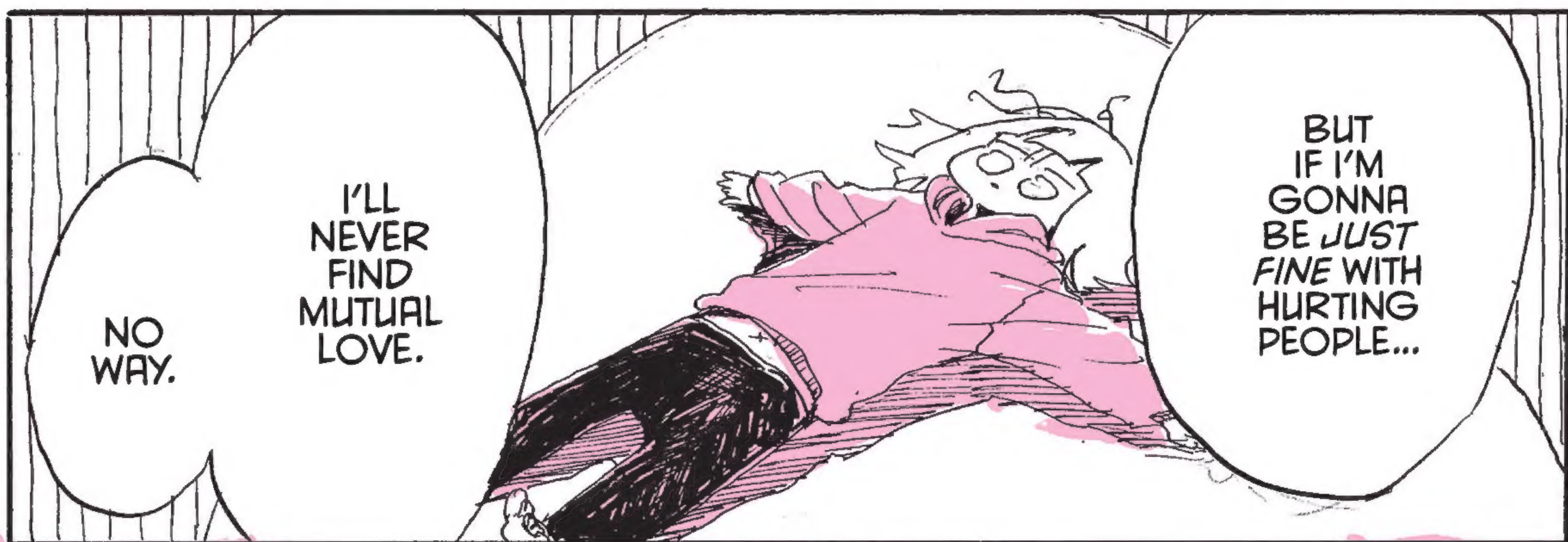






I WAS
ONLY
THINKING
ABOUT
MYSELF.

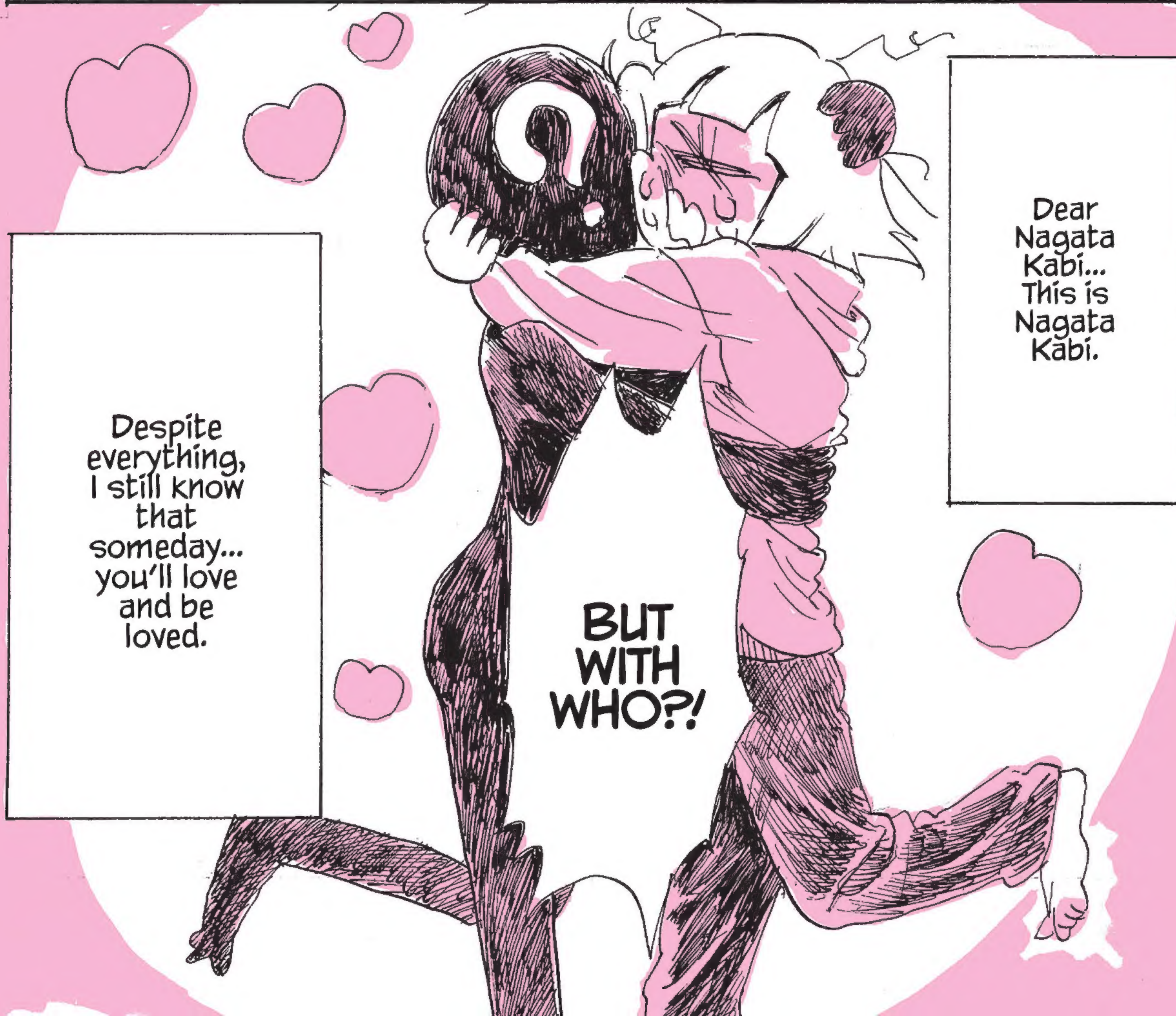
I FOUND
A WAY OF
SURVIVING
IN NON-
FICTION.



NO
WAY.

I'LL
NEVER
FIND
MUTUAL
LOVE.

BUT
IF I'M
GONNA
BE *JUST*
FINE WITH
HURTING
PEOPLE...



Despite
everything,
I still know
that
someday...
you'll love
and be
loved.

Dear
Nagata
Kabi...
This is
Nagata
Kabi.

**BUT
WITH
WHO?!**

SEVEN SEAS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

My Solo Exchange Diary^{Volume 1}

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ADAPTATION
Lianne Sentar

LETTERING AND LAYOUT
Karis Page

LOGO DESIGN
KC Fabellon

ORIGINAL DESIGN
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(Kawatani Design)

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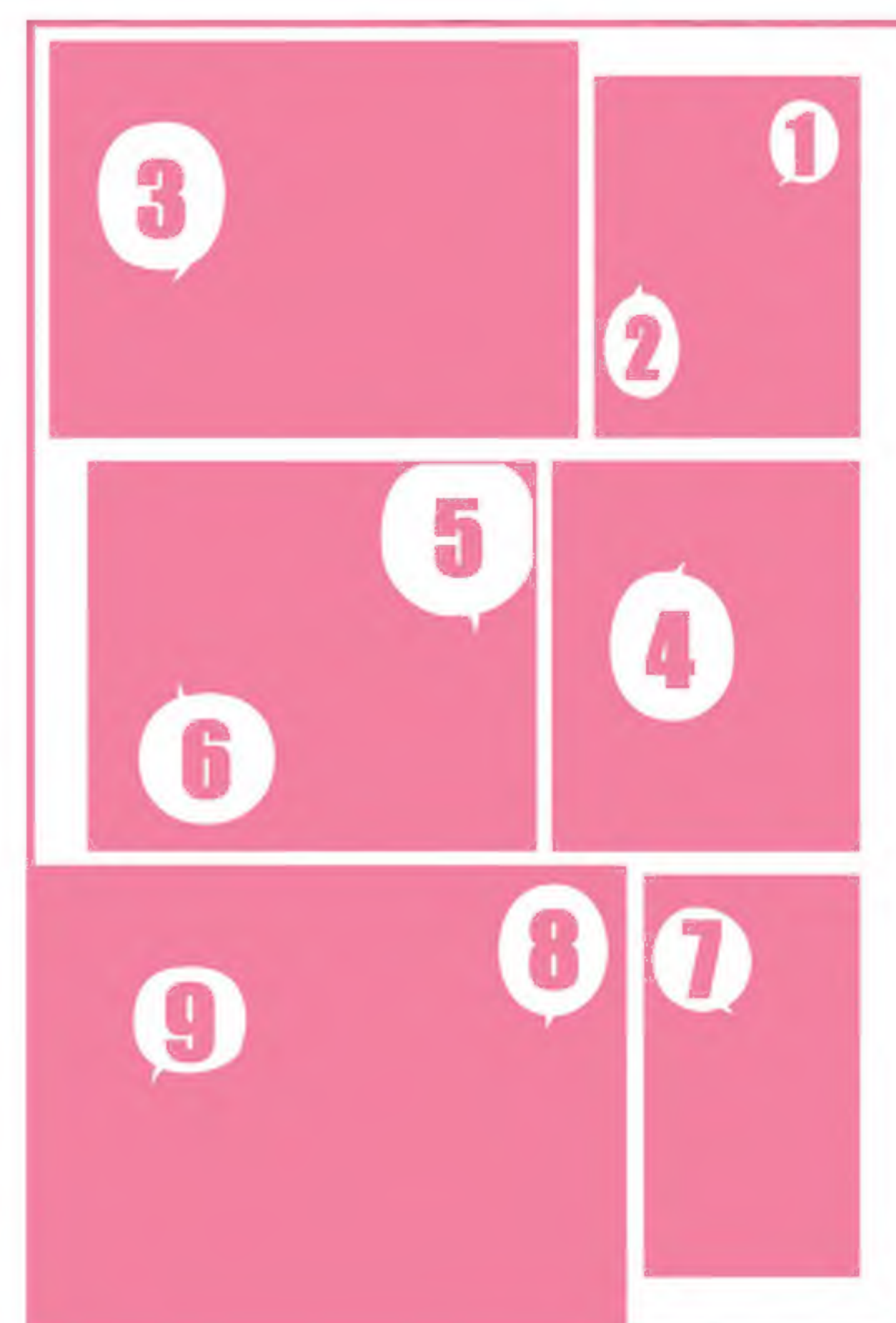
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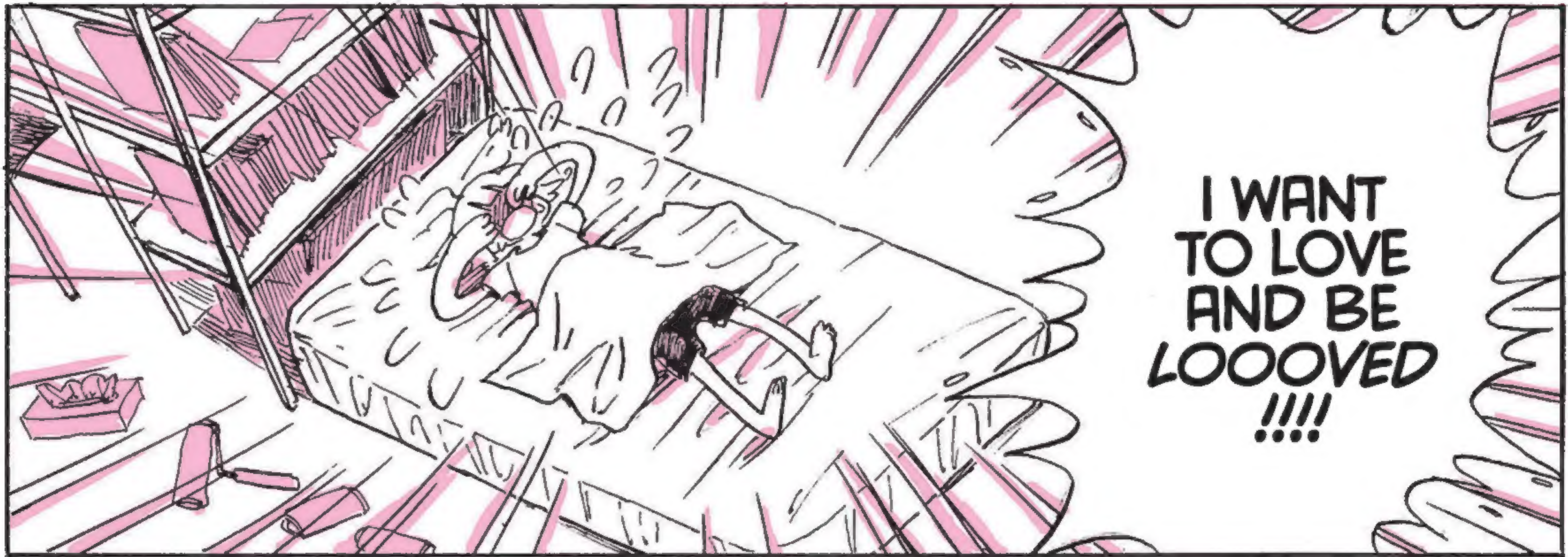
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READING DIRECTIONS

This book reads from *right to left*, Japanese style. If this is your first time reading manga, you start reading from the top right panel on each page and take it from there. If you get lost, just follow the numbered diagram here. It may seem backwards at first, but you'll get the hang of it! Have fun!!



Praise for *My Lesbian Experience with Loneliness*:
“...will resonate with anyone who has questioned themselves or ever been conflicted in their lives.
And let’s face it: that is all of us.” —*Teen Vogue*



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